

Semi-Monthly

Novels Series.

No.

BEADLE'S

173.

# DIME NOVELS



## THE RED COYOTE;

OR,

## The Flower of the Prairie.

BEADLE AND COMPANY, 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

J. W. Robe, Albany, N. Y.



# QUEEN OF THE WOODS ;

OR,

## The Shawnee Captives.



Her supple and elegant form, rounded and yet slight, was covered by a well-fitting jacket of soft, whitish-brown leather, made from the fawn, profusely adorned with beads and split quills. Below this was a petticoat of similar material, reaching to the knees ; and below this again, handsome leggings and moccasins.

The girl rose like a startled fawn and looked around. She gave a quick glance to the right and left, as if in surprise at the absence of the warriors.



# THE RED COYOTE



NEW YORK  
HAROLD AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS  
100 NASSAU ST.







# THE RED COYOTE

OR,

LUPAH, THE FLOWER OF THE PRAIRIE.

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BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

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NEW YORK:  
BEADLE AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS,  
98 WILLIAM STREET.



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(No. 173.)



# THE RED COYOTE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE FANDANGO OF TORREJON.

OUR story opens in the year 1800—when Mexico was under Spanish rule, before the time of the glorious revolution, which gave it liberty from an iron yoke. Our scene is laid in the village of Serie—a frontier post near the river Gila, the far-famed stream of golden sands.

Serie, at that time, was a village of perhaps five hundred souls. Being the head-quarters of the district, a regiment of Spanish soldiers were stationed here, quartered in a little fort, which hung, like the nest of some bird of prey, on the side of a little hill overlooking the town.

In times gone by, the neighborhood of Serie had been the scene of many a bloody contest between the wild Apache and Comanche warriors, the noted "Horse Indians," and the Spanish garrison. But of late years the "wild braves" had grown tired of attacking a point where they were certain to meet with a determined resistance, and had confined their raids to a more exposed country, where fat cattle and kindred plunder were to be had without the trouble of fighting for them.

'Twas nightfall, and the tinkle of guitars, mingling with the shrill notes of the violin, floated lazily on the calm evening air from Serie's pleasant valley. Let us question yonder "peon" (a civilized Indian, but a little better than a slave) as to the meaning of the rejoicing.

"What is it, señor?" replied he, his stolid face showing a sign of surprise.

"Torrejon?"

"Yes, señor—the caballero who lives in yonder hacienda," pointing to a stately mansion, built of adobes (unburnt bricks), by far the largest in the village. "His daughter, Manuelita,



the prettiest girl in all the province, to-day attains her eighteenth year, and the señor gives a fandango in honor of the event."

Let us follow the peon, and observe the scene.

The largest room in the hacienda of Torrejon had been gayly decked with festoons of flowers in honor of the festival. In one corner sat the musicians, busily engaged in tuning their instruments. Large tables, loaded with delicious viands, flanked with tall and stately flasks of rare old Spanish wine, pledged the welcome of the giver of the fandango.

The guests had not yet assembled, and in a small room adjoining the large one, sat the giver of the feast, Señor Torrejon. He was a Mexican, well advanced in years. Long hair of a silver gray coiled down about his shoulders, in waving ringlets, while a beard of the same hue hid his chin and neck. He was dressed in the usual rich but gaudy fashion of the Mexicans of the better class. There was a genial look to his grand old face, which bespoke him a gentleman both by birth and breeding.

"Voto à brios!" cried he to himself, using the old Mexican oath, "the wealth and beauty of our village will gather within my walls to-night in honor of my blooming child!"

A low, musical laugh rippled on the night-air, the laugh of a young girl, full of joy, full of innocence. The eyes of the father sparkled as the sound fell upon his ears.

"There she is!" he murmured; "by the Virgin, a father may well be proud of such a daughter!"

Then from the open door, beneath the festoons of flowers that swung above her head, Manuelita came to greet her father. She was indeed a child to glad the heart of a parent. Tall in figure, reaching fully the middle height—an exquisite form, with that lithe, willowy bend that enchants the eyes and breathes grace in every motion; an olive face, of that pure tint relieved by the warm, rich pink that half showed, half concealed itself on the cheek, which can only ripen beneath the kiss of a southern sun; wavy black hair, drawn back from a low, sweet brow, and fastened in the Spanish style in a simple knot behind, and that held in its place by a golden comb of antique shape; a pair of large, black eyes, fringed by long, ebon lashes, now melting into softness, now flashing with



delight, were the crowning beauties of that countenance. All was charming, even to the long, straight nose, which gave force and character to the face, and the small, pouting lips, rosy-red in their sweetness—lips a man might die to press.

A glow of fond pride showed itself upon the father's face as he rose to greet his child.

"Well, father," she questioned, "am I dressed to please you?"

Torrejon's eye swept over the silks and laces that but half concealed the beautiful form, then rested on her face, beaming in the pride of its youth and loveliness from the gaudy-colored ribbons that floated adown her dark hair, with the same beautiful effect that the leaves of the rose-tree have, shadowing forth the rose-bud.

"Indeed, you are," he replied. "I almost fear for the hearts of some of our brave gallants to-night. Thy smiles are dangerous. But, tell me, daughter, which one of the gentlemen that pay thee court dost thou favor?"

"Why, father," blushing answered the maiden, while her eyes sought the ground, "I do not know; I have hardly thought of love—are you tired of me, father, that you should wish me to leave you?"

"The saints forbid!" exclaimed the old gentleman, in comic dismay. "Tired of thee! my pearl—my treasure! Not I, in faith! But, still, my child,"—here the old man's voice deepened—"I must leave thee some time, and I would fain see thee the bride of some good and noble heart that will love and cherish thee when I have gone to that long home that waits for all."

"Oh, father! do not speak of leaving me!" and the dark eyes softened to tears.

"'Tis the course of nature; but, do not look sad. Tell me, has not the dashing commandante, Señor Miguel, been favored with a kindly glance from thy dark eyes?"

"The commandante!" The maiden's face expressed more fear than love at the mention of Miguel's name. "No, father, I fear him too much to love."

"Fear him, Manuelita?" questioned Torrejon. "Fear him? and wherefore?"

"Indeed, I hardly know. There is something in his manner



that inspires me with distrust," answered the maiden. "His lips ever wear a smile, and yet they seem to say, 'Avoid me, I am dangerous!'"

"Faith, you are right; he is not the lover that I should have chosen for you," returned the father. "But, what think you of the strange señor?"

"What?" answered the girl, quickly, a bright light shining in her eyes, and her full lips parting with a smile; "do you mean the American?—the gold-hunter?"

"No," said Torrejon, not perceiving her pleased look. "I mean the Señor Riva de Morales—he but lately from the frontier—he who bears upon his left cheek a saber scar, the result of some terrible blow, received in an encounter with Red Coyote's brigands in the mountains. A gallant gentleman, indeed. One can see the soldier delineated in every feature."

"Why, father," returned Manuelita, "I like him as little as I do the commandante."

"Ah!" suddenly rejoined Torrejon, just happening to remember her words; "but this American—this gold-hunter that you spoke of?"—and he turned his eyes full upon his daughter's face. And she was blushing like a rose, the tell-tale blood surging up through her cheeks and crimsoning her temple even to the roots of that glorious ebon hair; her eyes sought the ground.

"Aha!" cried Torrejon. "Is it possible that this stranger—this North American gold-hunter, has won the love that Spanish gallants have sighed for in vain?"

"But, father," replied Manuelita, smiling through her blushes, "I hardly know the American; we have met but thrice, and—"

"Thrice!" exclaimed Torrejon; "that's enough to kindle the spark of love into a devouring flame. Thrice! now to think of it, I remember that the very first time I saw thy mother she set my heart on fire. Thrice indeed! Once is often enough in our warm climate. Love is not a flower that takes days and months to grow, bud and blossom. No, 'tis like the summer lightning: it springeth out in a moment, and sometimes without cause or reason."

"Then you are not angry, father?" timidly asked Manuelita,



raising her full, dark eyes half entreatingly to her father's face.

"Angry! for what?" questioned Torrejon. "Because you have looked at a pair of blue eyes, in a handsome, manly face, and liked them? Not I, in faith! I like the American, myself. He is a gentleman, although apparently but a poor hunter; but gold, my child, does not always bring nobility of soul with it. I am glad that you like him. His friend, too, Señor Bourbon, is a worthy fellow, a keen shot with the rifle, and the best man to encounter a flask of wine that I ever saw. Therefore, my girl, make thy heart easy. If you love the American, good—if he loves thee, better; and I feel sure he must love thee, for few can look upon thee without doing so."

"Father, you will spoil me," answered Manuelita, blushing.

"Not I, by my faith!" laughingly replied Torrejon. "There never was a beauty yet but that was fully conscious of the fact. But, all shall be well, my child. I suppose the American is not rich, save in nature's gifts; but what of that? I have enough for both, and you shall be happy."

A loud shout rung through the outer courtyard—the cheerful music of mule-bells following, chiming together with varying cadence on the still evening air.

"The guests are coming, father," said Manuelita. "I will retire for a few moments, until they are all assembled."

She held up her lips for her father's kiss, then passed through the flowers that fringed the doorway, and was hidden from sight.

"She's the pride of my old heart!" murmured Torrejon, to himself, as he gazed after her retreating figure. "By the Virgin! she is very like her mother, except in disposition, for hers was none of the best; and though—Heaven forgive me—she was something of a vixen on earth, yet she is now, I trust, a saint above."

He turned to receive his company, and passed into the large room.

Quite a number of guests had already assembled, or were at this time dismounting in the courtyard. Those who had entered the house had done so without ceremony, as is the



custom at a fandango, which is open to all, and were seated at the various tables, discussing the viands and pledging healths to the fair Manuelita, the belle of the province.

Two men entered the room from the courtyard, at the same moment that Torrejon bade his friends welcome. He advanced to greet these two.

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## CHAPTER II.

### VELASCO, THE MURDERED HUNTER.

"HEALTH be with you, señors!" cried Torrejon, as he grasped them by the hand.

"Thanks, señor," replied the elder of the twain, who was none other than the commandante of the fort, Don Miguel Castello; and, as he is quite an important personage in our story, we will describe him. A man of forty-five, yet not looking a day over thirty, tall in stature, every inch the soldier; well built, a model for the sculptor; a small, dark face, the features regular and finely cut; a piercing black eye, restless and quick in motion, an eye to command, not to entreat; jet-black hair, worn short and curling at the ends, brushed carelessly over his high forehead, half concealing it from sight; a short, black mustache curled over his lip; while the traces of a heavy beard, now smoothly shaven, appeared upon his firm, resolute chin. Don Miguel was a Spaniard by birth, and had served in Mexico, now, some twenty years. When he first visited Serie, he held the position of ensign in a regiment entitled the Battalion of Castile—that was some fifteen years before the date of our story. Chances for glory and promotion in the Spanish service then, in Mexico, were few and far between—for, save the "Horse Indians," and perhaps a band of brigands, now and then, there were no other foes. So, for nearly fifteen years, Miguel Castello, although acknowledged to be a daring man and a good soldier, remained a simple ensign.

But, some three years before the time of which we write, a band of brigands sprung up in the mountains of Sonora; their



leader was a Mestizo (the child of an Indian and a white, or a half-breed); he was called the "Red Coyote"—the literal meaning of which is, Red Wolf—the term "Coyote" being from the Indian tongue, and applied to the "prairie-dog" and the "white wolf." The brigand was called "Red" on account of his dark color; while "wolf" came from his wolf-like courage and his daring deeds.

Troops were sent against the brigands. When the detachments were small, they found the "Coyote" without any trouble, and always suffered a terrible defeat at his hands. When the detachments were large, the brigands disappeared until the troops were recalled. So it went for nearly two years, until the Spanish viceroy, angered beyond measure, offered one hundred golden ounces, and speedy promotion, to the officer who could destroy the band of the "Red Coyote." Don Miguel accepted the offer with glee. He was allowed to select his men, and, by a skillful movement, deceived the "Red Coyote" as to their number. Lured from his mountain lair by the false information, the brigand swooped down upon his prey, but found himself outnumbered four to one. The brigands were utterly routed, and their famed leader, the "Red Coyote," was supposed to have been killed in the fight, as he was never seen afterward. Miguel, in reward, received the commission of commandante of Serie. All this took place one year previous to the fandango of Torrejon.

"Where is the lovely Manuelita, the belle of the fandango?" questioned Miguel, in his smooth, courtly way.

"She will join us presently," answered Torrejon; "but, in the mean time, gentlemen, allow me to offer you some refreshments—a flask of rare old Spanish wine and a tongue of buffalo."

"A buffalo-tongue at this season!" said Miguel, in astonishment. "From whom did you procure it?"

"Who from?" answered Torrejon. "Why, from that half-civilized being, not exactly a girl and not quite a woman—you look astonished, señors—I mean Lupah, or, as the Indians call her, the 'Flower of the Prairie.'"

"Indeed! and who is it that is called by so fanciful a name?" asked Miguel's companion, who answered to the name of Gomez, and held the commission of lieutenant.



"Is it possible, señor, that you do not know our Indian girl?" said Torrejon, in astonishment.

"You forget that the lieutenant is a stranger," answered Miguel, seating himself at a table and pouring out a glass of wine.

"True! true!" said Torrejon; "I had forgotten. But, be seated, señor, and Don Miguel can tell you the whole story."

Gomez and Torrejon seated themselves at the same table with Miguel, and filled their glasses.

"Come, commandante, enlighten me; I am dying with curiosity," said Gomez.

"Well," answered Miguel, taking his wine daintily, "I will tell you all I know of her. By birth she is a half-breed. Her father came to this village as a private soldier, in my own regiment—the Battalion of Castile. That was some twenty years ago. Serie was then in constant danger from the inroads of the Comanche and Apache Indians. One day, Velasco—such was the name of this girl's father—while hunting on the prairie, found a young Indian girl wounded near to death. He took her home; tended her carefully; she recovered, and became his wife. Shortly after his marriage, he saved the life of the commandante from a runaway horse; that procured his discharge from the service, and he became the hunter to the mission. Years passed on; children were born to gladden the hearts of Velasco and his Indian wife. One of the children was this girl, Lupah; the other was a boy, some five years older. One night the cottage of the hunter was discovered to be in flames; aid was freely rendered by all, but 'twas in vain. The cottage was in a lovely spot on the outskirts of the village, and the flames had gained such headway before assistance could be of any avail, that all within had perished, save this girl, who is now called Lupah."

The smooth voice of Miguel, as he finished his story, had acquired a peculiar metallic ring—a sound akin to the rattle of the rattlesnake—a warning of danger. His eyes, too, lost their restless motion, and were fixed, with a strong glare, upon the wall of the room, as though a foe was threatening him from that wall. The muscles of his delicate brown hand, too, had stiffened into iron and as he carelessly brought his wine-glass down



upon the table, it snapped in his hand as though it were an egg-shell. Some deep emotion—perchance some dark memory of the past—had cast its sable shroud over this man's heart. The breaking of the glass roused him; his companions had not noticed his peculiar look.

"Bah!" he half laughed. "Am I to always think that my saber is in my hand?"

"The glass is uncertain—a sudden jar, that's all," said Torrejon. "But, señor, there is more to this story of Lupah, as you shall hear. As the commandante has said, all within the house perished; but this girl, then an infant of some three years, was discovered among the bushes, a few hundred paces from the cottage, fast asleep."

"That was strange," said Gomez, evidently interested in the story.

"Yes," answered Torrejon, "but this is stranger still;" and he spoke in a lower tone, as men are apt to do when relating a tale of horror; "when the morning came, we examined the ruins; the bodies of Velasco and his wife had been protected from the flames by a portion of the wall, and in the breast of the hunter we found a dagger buried to the hilt!"

"Horrible!" cried Gomez, starting with surprise. Castello's eyes were again fixed on vacancy, with the same snake-like glare, and his head was thrown back as though defying a mortal foe. The others again did not notice.

"It was indeed horrible," said the old man, shaking his gray locks mournfully. "And the Indian wife, too, had met her death by a shot which had crashed through the temple."

"Both were murdered, then?" questioned Gomez.

"Yes, but the motive and the murderers were never discovered."

"But the boy—the elder of these two children—was his body never discovered?"

"No," answered Torrejon; "he had disappeared—whether the body had been consumed by the flame, or he had fled and escaped the fate of his parents, no one knows."

"And the assassins, you say, were never suspected?" asked the lieutenant.

"No, you are wrong there," said Castello, with a powerful



effort, removing his eyes from the wall. "'Twas thought to be the maiden crime of the brigand chief, the "Red Coyote."

"Ay," broke in Torrejon; "but, that is not so. This happened fifteen years ago, and the "Red Coyote" can not, even now, according to report, be over twenty-five or thirty at the most, which would make him a child when this happened."

"It may be so," returned Miguel, a slight trace of annoyance visible in his usual quiet, courtly voice. "I only spoke what I had heard."

"After the death of her parents," continued the old man, "I took Lupah, as she was named, home to my own house, and, as she advanced in years, I tried to have the good priest educate her, but the effort was useless. She either would not or could not learn; the good monk's lore was foreign to her nature, and she has grown into womanhood as wild and as beautiful as one of the spring flowers of her own native prairie."

"And knows she absolutely nothing?" asked Gomez.

"Oh, by the Virgin! but she does!" returned Torrejon. "She can hit an eagle on the wing with a single shot, and, as for riding there's not a herdsman in the village that is her equal."

"I confess," said Gomez, "I should like to see her."

"Well," answered Torrejon, "she's worth the looking at."

Another medley sound of jingling bells, and more guests poured into the room. Manuelita came from her apartment, and, mingling with her friends, bade them welcome, and the fandango commenced.

"See!" said Torrejon, as two strangers entered, clad in hunter's garb. Although their white skins were burnt deeply by the sun's warm rays, still they looked white by the side of the swarthy Mexicans, and their light locks proclaimed them to be North Americans—"the two American señors!"

It was the first time that the commandante and his lieutenant had met the Americans, and of course an introduction followed.

"Señors Kenton and Bourbon, our commandante, Don Miguel, and his lieutenant Don Gomez."



"Health be with you, señor," responded Miguel, rising courteously and giving his hand to Kenton.

"Wake snakes! Wal, how air ye?" said Mr. Peter Bourbon, commonly known as Whisky Pete at home—the surest shot and the best-hearted fellow in all Kentucky. He took Gomez' hand in his large paw and pressed it with a vigor that made that gentleman wince.

Arthur Kenton and Peter Bourbon—or as we shall hereafter call him, simply Pete, following his wishes in that matter—were born in the famous blue-grass region in Kentucky, not a hundred miles from the well-known Licking river, the scene of many an Indian fight. Art, as he was generally called, and Pete's parent died when both were young, and the two boys were brought up together. When they reached man's estate, they shouldered their trusty rifles and started for the Far West, to seek their fortune. Rumors had reached them even in their Kentucky home, of rivers with golden sands, beyond the setting sun, as the Indians expressed it, and which the after discovery of the California mines proved to be true.

Our heroes had found no gold as yet, but had reached the Mexican settlement on the Rio Gila, employing their time in trapping and hunting.

In the valley of Serie, our fair-haired, blue-eyed Kentuckian, Arthur, had found an attraction whose spell exceeded any golden legend of the wandering Indian; yet, even in his own heart, he had not dared to hope to win the haughty and wealthy Mexican beauty Manuelita. He admired her from a distance, even as he did the sun, and with as little hope that he should one day possess her as that he should own the orb of day.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE LOVE THAT WILL NEVER DIE.

THE dancing was now going on busily. The commandante had secured the hand of Manuelita and led the dance. Pete had taken possession of a little dark-eyed, brown-skinned Mexican beauty, and was executing "double shuffles" and "pigeon-wings" in true Kentucky style, much to the delight of his soft-eyed partner, and to the disgust of the Mexican dancers, who thus found themselves beaten on their own ground and by an accursed "Gringo," as they politely termed Pete, in an undertone.

Manuelita's hand being engaged, Arthur did not care to join in the dance, but took refuge in the doorway leading to the courtyard, where he could still watch the scene and enjoy the cool evening air. Leaning against the doorpost he gave himself up to thought, but was suddenly roused from his abstraction by the pressure of a light touch upon his arm. Turning with some little astonishment, he beheld at his side a young girl, dressed in the Indian garb, a little fairy-like creature, hardly reaching to his shoulder, a girl just budding into womanhood. Her features were small but regular, save that the cheek-bones slightly denoted the Indian blood. Her eyes were large, deep-black and full of tenderness; her complexion a clear red, as though all the blood within her had broken loose from the veins and flooded the surface beneath the skin, seeking a free passage to the outer air. Her limbs were well-proportioned, and her step was as elastic as the tread of a deer. She was costumed in the Indian fashion, in a buckskin hunting-shirt, curiously trimmed with variously-colored beads and porcupine-quills, stained in many hues. Her arms were bare to the shoulder, and ornamented with bead bracelets; her feet were shod with dainty little moccasins, also trimmed with the parti-colored quills of the porcupine. Buckskin leggings protected her lower limbs, but did not hide their exquisite shape. She was a model for a dusky Venus. Her long black hair fell in



rich, tangled masses over her shoulders; a circlet of plumes, from the center of which rose a single eagle-feather, adorned her head. In her hand she held a little rifle, ornamented with rude bits of silver, let into the stock, evidently by no craftsman's hand, and a long, keen-edged hunting-knife hung at her belt. She was a picture of health, strength and beauty—not the quiet beauty of civilization, but the savage beauty of the savanna.

Arthur gazed at her with wonder, and thought that never before had he seen such a picture.

"Do you not remember me?" she asked.

"Remember you? no!" replied Arthur, in surprise.

"Ah," sighed the girl, a look of sadness filling her dark eyes; "Arthur, I have not forgotten you!"

"How? you know my name!" cried Arthur, more and more astonished.

"Yes, I shall never forget it;" her voice deepened into plaintiveness as she spoke.

"How did you know my name?" questioned Arthur.

"See!" said the girl, holding up the stock of her rifle for his inspection.

"What is this?" said Arthur, as he examined some letters rudely cut in the rifle-stock. "Arthur! my own name!"

"Yes, I did it!" cried the maiden, delighted.

"You; but how?" Arthur was puzzled.

"With my knife," said the girl, pointing to the knife at her girdle. "The good priest taught me the letters."

"Yes; but how did you know my name? We have never met before?" questioned Arthur.

"Yes!"

"But where?"

"Don't you remember?" The tone of the girl's voice was saddened as she spoke.

"No, I am sure I do not," replied Arthur, pained at the sad look of that pure, innocent, child-like face. "Tell me some of the circumstances; perhaps I can, then."

"Yes, I will tell you all;" and an eager look lighted up the full, dark eyes, which were bent lovingly on him. "It is so



many months ago, that I can not count them. Early one morning Mescal and I—Mescal is my horse, señor—were on the prairie. We had gone a good many leagues, for the game were frightened at something, and I could not find any thing to shoot. At length I came to a little spring; my horse was thirsty, so I dismounted and led him to the water. As I did so, I noticed that the grass and flowers about the spring were crushed and trampled; then I knew why the birds and deer had fled; a band of Indian braves had been there. Suddenly my horse began to tremble; there was danger lurking near. Whiz! went something through the air. It was an Indian arrow. Then another struck my poor horse, and glanced along his side. He broke from my grasp and fled; then, from their concealment in the tall grass, the wild Indian braves rushed toward me. I was angry then; I thought not of danger; the fiery blood of my Indian race was in my head and hand. I leveled my rifle at the foremost chief and fired; the ball struck him full in the temple; his tall form tottered for a moment, the plumes of his head-dress fluttered in the wind, and then he fell heavily to the earth, crushing the flowers which he crimsoned with his blood!"

"Brave girl!" cried Arthur, listening to her story with admiration.

"Yes," said the girl, in her simple, innocent way; "but I did not feel brave then—when he fell almost at my feet, the anger was gone and I felt sorry. Then the wild braves seized me. I had slain their great chief, and in expiation of the deed they condemned me to the flames and stake. I was to die at once; they tied my hands, bound me to a young sapling and heaped the fagots around me."

"Poor girl, you were in great peril."

A grateful look from the full, dark eyes rewarded Arthur for his sympathy.

"Yes. I thought then of the prayers that the good priest had taught me, when I was a little girl—of my dead father, Velasco, and of my murdered mother, and I said to myself as they lit the fire and the smoke and flames began to ascend: 'My mother, will you welcome your child above?' Then the flames came nearer and nearer; my senses began to reel. Suddenly a loud shout rung on the air; the report of rifles



followed ; the cord that bound me was cut ; a strong arm tore me from my dangerous position ; a loud voice cried : ' Arthur, bring the girl ! ' Then I knew that my preserver's name was Arthur. He bore me away toward his horse, then was compelled to return to the rescue of his companion. A horse came running up to me—'twas my own Mescal ! In a moment I was in the saddle, then a stray shot struck him. Madened with pain, I could not restrain him, and despite myself, he carried me straight for Serie. ' Do you remember me now, señor ? ' "

" Yes," said Arthur, his face lighting up with interest, as he gazed on the lovely child, whose life he had saved ; " I do remember you ; but do not wonder that I did not before. I saw you but for a moment, and then 'twas in the heat and bustle of the fight. I was compelled to leave you and return to the assistance of my friend, and finally we were overpowered by numbers and compelled to seek safety in the speed of our horses. You had disappeared, I knew not where. Can you wonder then that your face passed from my mind ? " "

" But I did not forget you ! " replied the girl, whom our readers have by this time probably recognized as Lupah, the Flower of the Prairie. " No, I shall never forget you ! " The face was full of tenderness and love as she said these words, and the dark eyes that gazed upon him wore an expression of eager longing. " I shall never forget you ! " she repeated. " You are all and all in this world to me, and here at your feet I could lay down and die, gazing upon your face with the same adoration that I shall one day look upon the great Wah-con-dah above ! " "

" Why, my girl, your gratitude is great indeed," said Arthur, looking earnestly and curiously at the sweet face, upturned so lovingly to his. Her devotion pleased him ; few men can resist the voice of a beautiful girl, telling, unsolicited, her love, unless indeed their heart be already tangled up in passion's skein. Arthur was half in love with the beautiful Manuelita, but yet not fully committed. In his own mind he had not dared to allow himself even to hope to woo and win her ; therefore he could listen with pleasure to the clear, sweet tones of Lupah.

" Yes," said the half-breed maiden, looking him full in



the face, while the mild eyes told her passion. "I love you so much!"

"Do you?" answered Arthur, not knowing exactly what to say to this frank declaration, and yet not displeased by it.

"Yes. Do you love me?" frankly questioned Lupah, watching his eyes intently for the sign which would bring joy to her soul.

Arthur evaded the question.

"You love me, almost a stranger? Do you not love your protector, Señor Torrejon, and his daughter Manuelita?"

"Ah!" cried the girl, the look in the eyes changing to one of quick inquiry, "speak *my* name!"

"Eh?" returned Arthur; "what do you mean?"

"Call me Lupah!" said the girl, imploringly.

"What a strange fancy!"

"Do it—to please me!"

"Well—Lupah!"

"Ah!" the eyes of Lupah were cast sadly upon the ground. There they rested for a moment, as if in thought, and then were again raised with a saddened look to his face. "Now hers!" she said.

"Hers? who?" questioned Arthur, puzzled by this strange conduct.

"The Spanish girl, Manuelita!"

"Certainly, if it will please you—Manuelita!"

The quick ear of the Indian girl listened to the sound which was the death-knell to her hopes. Her hearing, trained on the prairie and keen as that of the deer, caught the difference in his tone of voice, when he pronounced the two names—Lupah, the Flower, and her rival, Manuelita, the haughty Mexican beauty. She detected the accent that love gave to the voice, the accent of which he himself was unconscious.

A sigh came from her heart and trembled on her lips. She turned mournfully to depart.

"Stay, Lupah!" he cried; "where are you going?"

"To the prairie—to my home!"

"And you will leave me?"



"Yes!" came in a low, subdued tone from the lips of Lupah.

"And why?" questioned Arthur.

"When you speak my name it comes from your lips; when you say Manuelita, it comes from your heart, and yet I love you better than she ever can!"

She gained the outer doorway, then turned and gazed at him with a long look—a look so full of love—a look so full of sadness. He extended his hands toward her, as if to stay her motion.

"Lupah!" he cried, "do not leave me!"

"I must!" she said, mournfully. "I love you too well for my own peace to stay where you are since you can not love me. Oh, Arthur, I desire your happiness more than any thing else in the whole world, and to make you happy, I would willingly lay down my life."

"But, Lupah, stay and hear me!" he implored.

"No! no! farewell, Arthur; I love you better than she ever can; farewell!"

And with a light step she hurried from his sight. He watched her as she crossed the court-yard and disappeared through the outer gate.

"She does love me!" he exclaimed to himself, as he thought of her parting words. "And am I sure that I love another? Is not this passion for Manuelita but a fleeting fancy, that may be gone ere many hours are over? or do I indeed love her?"

Pondering on these questions, he gazed into the ball-room—the first dance had just ended. Manuelita was seated by the further window, while the commandante bent low over her chair, with whispered compliment and honeyed word. His tones, though, fell on listless ears. Manuelita's glance was wandering through the room as if in search of some one. The commandante noted this, and pressed his finely-cut lips together in vexation. At this moment Arthur stepped from the shadow of the doorway into the room. Manuelita's wandering glance detected his manly form, and a pleased smile appeared upon her lips. Arthur caught her glance, and bowed; the smile on Manuelita's face said, "Come." Arthur obeyed the look, and approached the beautiful Mexican girl. Miguel resigned his position by Manuelita's side to Arthur, with a pleasant smile.



The commandante had a quick eye, and was familiar with love's mysteries. He had detected the glance of Manuelita, the call, and Arthur's compliance.

"Caramba!" he muttered, as he slowly threaded his way through the crowded room. "Shall this North American carry off the prize which I have toiled so to gain? By the Virgin, no! But I need another hand beside my own. Ah!" he cried, half aloud, as his eye fell upon a gayly-dressed gallant, with a peculiar reddish complexion, and a deep scar upon his left cheek, who was sauntering leisurely toward Miguel, "there is the man for my purpose."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE WOLF SHOWS HIS TEETH.

"Señor," said Miguel, approaching Morales, who was a handsome, dashing fellow, one who, perhaps, had seen the light of twenty-five summers—"can I have a few words with you?"

"Certainly, señor," replied the man with the scarred cheek, who answered to the name of Riva Morales; "I am entirely at your service."

"Come this way, then," said the commandante, leading the way to a small apartment joining the ball-room. "Here we shall be in quiet."

Miguel motioned the other to be seated.

"You are called, I believe, Riva Morales, and have but lately arrived from Spain?" questioned Miguel, fixing his eyes full upon the stranger's face. "I wish to relate to you a slight portion of the history of our province."

Morales seemed uneasy at this beginning, and cast a searching glance at the calm features of the commandante.

"You are right regarding my name, and my recent return from Spain; but 'twas a visit there, merely. I am not a Spaniard, but a Mexican."

"I know that," said Miguel, quickly.

"You do?" said the other, starting, in spite of himself.



"Yes, and I also know that the scar that you bear on your left cheek was received in Mexico."

"Well," replied Morales, evidently annoyed at the turn the conversation had taken, "I have made no secret of that; 'twas received in the mountains, in a skirmish with the brigands of the 'Red Coyote.'"

"Ah!" cried the commandante, with an accent of disbelief. "Although a Mexican, you are, I believe, somewhat of a stranger to our province of Sonora. I am about to relate to you a slight portion of our history."

Miguel still kept his eyes fixed upon Morales' face. The stranger with the scar was evidently not overpleased at this strange beginning, but he simply said:

"Go on; I am all attention."

"I will," responded Miguel. "A year or so ago, the mountains of Sonora were infested by a band of brigands. They were well led, and their chief, surnamed the 'Red Coyote,' displayed the skill of a trained and practiced soldier. In all the numerous encounters that took place between the brigands and our Spanish soldiers, the 'ladrones' invariably had the best of it. At last I solicited and obtained permission to try my skill. I formed my plan, deceived the 'Wolf' as to the number of my force, and for the first time the 'Red Coyote' met his master."

"Yes," said Morales, while a sneer curled his lip, "you were four to one, and he was overpowered by force of numbers."

"Very true," quietly remarked Miguel, at the same time dropping his hand to his belt and drawing a pistol—the Mexican scarf which hung from his shoulder concealing the motion from view. "You are better informed than I thought for. As you have said, he was crushed. That was the aim and object of the expedition, and in it I succeeded. That success gave me my present command."

He paused.

"Well?" questioned Morales, as much as to say, what has this to do with me.

"Have patience," calmly replied Miguel. "I will not detain you long. The leader of these brigands, the famous 'Red Coyote,' was supposed to have been killed in the skirmish."

"Supposed?" said Morales, and an evil look glared in his eye.



"Ay, supposed—for he did not die."

Morales' hand quietly sought the handle of his knife, in his belt, and his quick eye wandered toward the door to note if the way were clear. The hanging scarf hid the action of the hand from Miguel's eye. He saw the glance, though, and guessed its purport.

"I have had the honor of a personal interview with this famous robber-chief," continued Miguel; "during the skirmish, even crossed blades, and with a stroke of my saber laid his cheek bare to the bone. He now bears a scar like to the one on your face. *You are the 'Red Coyote!'*"

Morales, or the "Red Coyote"—for it was indeed the famous brigand chief—leaped to his feet and was about to spring upon Miguel, knife in hand, but the commandante was prepared, and with a quick motion brought his pistol to the poise. For the second time the "Red Coyote" had met his master.

"A motion, and I fire!" said Miguel, in his usual quiet tone, save that the strange metallic ring had again appeared. "You are in my power, and at my mercy. A single cry from me would bring my soldiers upon you, and they would tear you to pieces with as little remorse as dogs the wolf, whose name you bear."

The knife dropped from the hand of the "Coyote," and with clasped palms he knelt before the commandante, and bowed his head in despair.

"Oh! señor, have mercy upon me! You see before you a crushed and broken-hearted man. Your star is in the ascendent, and mine pales before its light. You have destroyed my band, and marked me for life. Oh, then, señor commandante, have mercy, and spare me."

Thus in broken tones did the once famous brigand chief—the dreaded "Red Coyote"—beg for his life.

Miguel rose to his feet; a sneer curled his lips as he gazed upon the kneeling man; an expression of profound disdain passed across his face. He replaced the pistol in his belt, and said to himself, half aloud:

"The Indians, then, are liars, for they say that 'the wolf at bay will fight.' They call you 'Coyote.' *Bah!* rabbit would be a better term!"



Oh, señor commandante, thou shouldst have remembered the old Spanish proverb: "Build a bridge of silver for a flying enemy;" for, in another second, the arms of the "Coyote" are lapped around thy legs. Taken thus by surprise, a single moment and Don Miguel lay on his back on the floor, while the brigand bent over him with his keen knife close to his throat. The "wolf" had played the fox and tricked the Spaniard.

"Now call thy soldiers!" hissed the brigand through his close-set teeth; "but were they as swift as the lightning's flash, they could not save you from the knife of the 'Red Coyote!'"

"Stay!" said Don Miguel, his coolness never forsaking him, even in this dire extremity. "I mean you no harm. Had I wished your life, could I not have seized you in the open ball-room? I need not have brought you here. I wish to serve both you and myself."

"Good!" cried the brigand; "there is reason in what you say. Give me your word not to betray me and I will release you."

"You have it, on the honor of a soldier," replied Don Miguel.

The "Coyote" assisted him to rise.

"Now," said the brigand, "how can I serve you?"

Miguel drew him to the door that looked in upon the dancers. He pointed to Manuelita, who was now floating through the dance with Arthur.

"You see—Manuelita—I love her!" said Miguel, in low, intense tones, in which there was a world of passion.

"Yes," answered the "Coyote," surveying the scene with a rapid glance; "so does some one else—the American for instance."

"I hate him!" said Miguel; "I would love her alone!"

"Good—you shall!" replied the brigand.

"Ay, but how?"

"Remove the American from your path!"

"That will be difficult."

"No; take some occasion to fix a quarrel upon him, arrange a duel, one without witnesses, and insist upon its taking place at once."



"But, even then, the American may be the victor!" said Miguel.

"Leave that to me; rest assured he can not be," replied the "Coyote."

"But the place of meeting?"

"Let it be the Cañon of Death."

"The Cañon of Death?" questioned Miguel.

"Ay," returned the "Coyote," "that fatal spot where no bird sings and no insect hums, whose poisonous vapor is death to living life. You know the place; 'tis but a few hundred paces from the ruined cottage of the murdered hunter, Velasco."

Miguel started, his face turned a deathly white, and but for the arm of the brigand, he must have fallen.

"What is the matter?" asked the "Coyote."

"Nothing—a sudden faintness, that is all," replied Miguel; "'tis over now."

"Well, this is settled. And now, what service can you do me in return?" asked the "Wolf."

"I will procure your pardon from the Government and—what other service do you desire?"

"Some day," returned the "Coyote," "I may ask your aid, for I too have a foe."

"Who is it?" questioned Miguel.

"I know not his name or whereabouts."

"How then to find him?"

The eyes of "Red Coyote" sparkled, and a look of savage hate crept over his face as he replied:

"Destiny will lead me to him; the avenging fates above will slowly bring our lines of life together, and he will walk blindly on, unconscious that, stanch as is the prairie-wolf on the trail of the wounded buffalo, so I follow in his track, thirsting for his blood."

"Well," said Miguel, "when you find him you shall have my aid. Now we'll return to the ball-room, and I'll take the first opportunity that offers to quarrel with the American. I must come upon him alone."

"Yes, I will be near at hand. Bah! the American's life is as good as gone already," sneered the brigand, "and the beautiful Manuelita will have to look for consolation in thy



arms. By the Virgin ! but she is a lovely girl. I have a sister, that, if she be living, must be near her age. I would give ten years of my life to find her."

"You know not where she is, then?" questioned Miguel.

"No. I have not seen her for fifteen years." The face of the brigand saddened as he said this, which proved that all feeling was not yet dead in his breast.

"'Tis a long time, you would hardly know her," said Miguel.

"Nor she me ; but we may come together ; stranger things than that has happened. But see ! the American and Manuelita have finished their dance ; he may leave her for a moment before the next one commences. If so, then comes your opportunity." The keen eye of the "Coyote" noted all the chances.

As the "Wolf" had predicted, after conducting Manuelita to a seat, Arthur sought the fresh air to cool his heated brain. Miguel followed him instantly.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE CHALLENGE.

ARTHUR stood leaning in the doorway leading to the courtyard. The gentle breeze that came in fitful little gusts through the trees of the valley, was grateful to his heated temples. His thoughts were busy. From Manuelita's manner and words that evening during the dance, he felt assured that she cared for him—nay, more, that she loved him. How strange is human nature ! He would have welcomed the knowledge two hours before, as would a dying man the gift of life ; but now, ever and anon, the sweet, dusky face of Lupah, the Flower of the Prairie, would rise before him. Again he would hear her low, clear voice saying in all the artlessness of childhood and of innocence, "I love you better than she ever can," and then to his own heart he put the question, which of the two should reign there : Manuelita, the Mexican beauty, or the



Indian wild-flower, and the heart answered not. Who should decide? In his own mind, too, he questioned the knowledge as to Manuelita's liking for him. Was he not too easily influenced by a gracious word or a kindly smile? things perhaps that she thought naught of and bestowed freely on all. Her father, too, rich in his broad acres, his countless herds and golden ounces, would he consent that his only child, the heir to all, should wed a poor man, and a stranger both to her country and her kin?

"No! no!" he said to himself, half aloud; "the beauty of Sonora, the peerless Manuelita, can never be the bride of the poor gold-hunter."

"You are right, señor," said the quiet, taunting voice of Miguel, the commandante, who had approached unobserved and overheard his words; "she can never be your bride. And I am glad that you have come to that opinion; it will save you trouble, for I, too, love the fair Manuelita. I have resolved that she shall be mine, and woe to the man that dares to stand in my path!"

Arthur's blood leaped into his cheeks at these cool, insolent words; the laughing blue eye became stern.

"Do you mean that for a threat?" he asked.

"Does it sound like one?" mockingly returned the commandante.

"A little, señor." Arthur's voice was now cold and pitiless; in his own mind he had determined to give Don Miguel a needed lesson. "You are called a soldier and therefore a gentleman, yet you disgrace your rank and descend to play the office of a spy."

"You are a liar!" coolly replied Miguel.

Arthur's blood flew through his veins like liquid fire, and, before the commandante could guess his intention, he struck him to the floor with a single well-dealt blow. With a cry of rage, Miguel rose from the ground, the blood streaming from his cut lips; he drew his saber, but Señor Morales, entering the room at the moment, caught his arm. Arthur had drawn a small pistol from the pocket of his hunting-shirt and awaited the attack.

"Gentlemen, in the name of the Virgin! what means this?" cried Morales, apparently in great astonishment.



"The *Gringo* dog has struck me!" hissed Miguel.

"Fool, you brought it on yourself!" returned Arthur, hotly.

"Do you dare to meet me, sword in hand, or are you brave only when you attack an unprepared foe?" questioned Miguel, sneeringly.

"I will meet you when and where you like, and with the weapons that suit you best," answered Arthur, now fully determined in his own mind, that if they did meet, he would put a mark on the courtly commandante that he would bear to his grave.

"The weapons, sabers—the time, at once—the place of meeting, the Cañon of Death," said Miguel.

"I accept the terms. Señor Morales, although you are a stranger to me, may I ask the loan of your saber for a few hours?" The tone of Arthur's voice was quiet, but determined.

"Certainly," replied Morales, unbuckling his saber, and handing it to Arthur; "but, gentlemen, surely you will not encounter without seconds?"

"Yes," replied the commandante; "we do not need any witnesses to our fight!"

"No," said Arthur, "it is a duel to the death; but one of us will survive it. If I do not return your sword within two hours, look for it beside my dead body in the Cañon of Death!"

Arthur passed through the door. Miguel was about to follow, when Morales seized him by the arm.

"The hilt of my saber is broken," he said in a whisper in Miguel's ear. "A slight blow upon the guard will release the blade from the handle!"

Miguel smiled—a cold, devilish smile, and followed Arthur. Morales watched them until they disappeared in the darkness.

The face of the "Red Coyote" grew sad; dark memories of the past were stealing o'er his soul—the memory of a crime committed fifteen years before near to the cañon's side—a crime, the expiation of which one day would come. Velasco's murder was yet unavenged.

The "Coyote" gazed from the doorway; the new moon was just rising over the tree-tops.



"I must away!" cried the "Wolf;" "I can overtake them before they reach the cañon. Not a foot of the ground but is known to me in darkness as well as in the light."

He passed through the door and entered the darkness; he made his way through the town and sought the lower end of the valley, moving with a rapid yet stealthy step. He had proceeded some ten minutes, then paused and listened. The sound of footfalls could just be heard in the distance.

"There they are," he murmured. "Now to keep at their heels without being observed by the American. He is a hunter, and his ear must be keen."

With noiseless step he followed upon the trail.

We will now return to the fandango. The dancing had waxed fast and furious. Pete and his little dark-eyed partner had been the life and soul of their set. All the Mexican beauties murmured, "What a delightful dancer!" while all the men, jealous of his lofty "pigeon wings"—which some of them had attempted and in the attempt ingloriously failed—said between their teeth that he was a "cursed *Gringo* dog!" All this was said quietly, and not in Pete's hearing, as the not over brawny Mexicans had a high respect for our Kentucky friend's muscular development, and reasoned shrewdly enough, that he who could dance all night without feeling tired, would probably be not a whit behind when it came to fighting.

Pete and his lady strolled into one of the small rooms during a pause in the dancing to enjoy the cool air.

Pete's companion was Manuelita's waiting-maid, a peon girl by birth, but she had been reared with Manuelita, and was looked upon by her more in the light of a sister than a servant. She was a pretty, winsome little maid, full of life and fun. Pete thought he had never looked upon such a pair of sparkling dark-brown eyes before.

"I say?" he questioned, "what's your name? It ought to be sunflower, for you're as pretty as one."

The girl smiled at the compliment.

"You flatter me, señor. They call me Rita."

"Jumping ginger!" cried Pete in admiration; "why that's music, ain't it? I say, sunflower—I mean Rita—you ain't married, are ye?"



A sort of comic blush came upon Pete's honest face as he asked this rather plain question.

Rita laughed, and cast her eyes demurely upon the ground.

"No, señor; did you think I was?"

"Wal, no!" hesitatingly said Pete; "but you *ought* to be, by ginger! Putty set of 'greasers' they've got round here, to let a gal like you, with eyes jest like a heifer's, to go round loose. By snakes! if you were down in old Kentuck, you'd have been hitched to some smart *crutter* long 'fore now! That's so, sunflower!"

"What, whether I was willing or no?" asked the maid, her brown eyes opening to their widest extent.

"No, in course not," replied Pete; "but I kinder guess, if the right sort of chap come along, you wouldn't be ugly, would you?"

"No, I think not; I try never to be ugly, because the good father says that every time I frown it will leave a wrinkle in my face!" innocently replied Rita.

"He knows what's what!" said Pete, looking at the little round, rosy face before him, with longing eyes; "but if he'd 'a' said dimples, now, he'd 'a' hit it. I can't see nary wrinkle, but you've got dimples all over that little face of yours."

"Oh, señor!" said Rita, blushing but delighted at the compliment; "how *can* you say such things?"

"How can I? It's as easy as fallin' off a log; it's human nater to be pleased with putty things, and I'm human, I think," said Pete, honestly. "I swow, I think a heap of you, sunflower."

"I'm sure I like you, señor," returned Rita, archly. "You dance so delightfully, and are so different to any one that I have ever seen."

"Wal, I aint a 'greaser,' that's a fact," rejoined Pete; "but I wonder where Art's gone to? I hain't seen him fur some time."

"You mean the other American?" questioned Rita.

"Yes."

"I think he is with my mistress. She thinks a great deal of the señor."



The waiting-maid looked into Pete's face to see how he would receive the intelligence.

"Wal, do you think so?" Pete's face brightened at the idea. To tell the truth, he had deeply fallen in love with the pretty brown eyes at his side, but had hardly dared to give it a place in his thoughts for fear that Art might not approve of his marrying a female "greaser," but, if Art liked the mistress, why, he might like the maid.

"So you think he's with your mistress, eh? Wal, she's a putty gal; ain't any great shakes ahead of you, though. S'pose he and she make a double team of it? I reckon I'd have to get married, just out of company like." Rita blushed and cast down her eyes before his ardent look. The music sounded and they returned to the dance.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CANON.

A DEEP gulch in the rocky hills, through which ran the Rio Gila, shadowed in by the pinion and cactus. Above the gulch a small plain, in it a basin filled with stagnant water, poisonous with the vapors of death. The decaying vegetable matter that half filled the small hollow and disputed with the green and slimy water for the privilege of living and of dying there, gave forth the malarious taint, that is poison to the blood and death to the living man. A small, sluggish stream, that wound its crooked way among the rocks, down to the bottom of the gulch or cañon—to use the Mexican term—like a venomous serpent, was the sole issue of the dark pool above. On one side of the cañon the rocks formed one vast wall, broken only here and there by small ledges and clumps of wild, witch-like bushes. Sheer down it was a hundred feet or more to the bottom of the cañon. On the other side, the rocks rose in small successive ledges, forming a rude pathway which stopped abruptly some twenty feet from the top of the gulch, but a pinion tree, uprooted by some storm, and



compelled to bow its giant head in meek submission, had fallen from the other side of the cañon and rested on the topmost ledge of rocks, forming a rude bridge, by means of which one might descend to the rocky pathway and thus reach the bottom of the cañon. A clear head and a steady foot were needed for this task, and, once across the tree that formed the bridge and on the rocks below, should accident or design remove the fallen tree that spanned the chasm, terrible would be the fate of those below, for by the pinion tree alone could they reach the world again. Save a small open space in the bottom of the cañon, through which the dark fever-stream took its slow way, the rocks closed together again in one almost unbroken wall, at the foot of which the stream sunk into the earth and disappeared among the rocks, leaving no traces of its way.

Well might the simple peons, deeply tainted with superstition, regard this dark cañon as the abode of the Evil One himself, while the but little better educated Mexicans, knowing of the malarious vapor which rose from and hung like a dark mist over its portals, aptly styled it the Cañon of Death, and no gold that ever was dug from streamlet side, or wrested from yellow sands, would induce even the poorest of them to pass a single hour after nightfall, in sleep within its dark shadows. Death was said to be certain to attack the living man who thus dared to test the powers of the fever-king. And though the cañon's side was rich in gigantic vines, heavily laden at this season with amber and purple grapes, no hand, yellow or red, Mexican or Indian, dared to pluck them; there they blossomed, there they swelled to ripe, juicy fullness, filling the air with their musky fragrance, but the birds alone feasted upon them.

To this dread spot, Don Miguel Castello, the commandante of Serie Valley, led Arthur Kenton, the American gold-hunter.

They crossed the pinion tree that served as a bridge, gained the upper ledge of rocks, and then descended to the bottom of the cañon.

The battle-ground was reached.

Here, within a circle of perhaps thirty feet, shadowed by the dark branches that spread over their heads like a mourning-



cloak, they were to measure sabers and fight until the death.

The moon had now fully risen, and was sailing along the clear sky, bathing the earth with its pure, mellow light. Its beams came down through the green branches, and played fantastically upon the ink-like waters of the cañon's stream. They flashed now and then upon the steel saber scabbards, and broke into little rivulets of light upon the clear surface of polished metal. Ever and anon, it lighted up two faces, one or both of which might, ere many minutes, grow cold and still.

"Is this the place?" asked the American, after they had reached the little opening at the bottom of the cañon.

"It is!" responded the commandante, unable to repress a slight shudder, as a dark thought of the past, which the cañon recalled to him, flitted across his mind. "I shall not be sorry when this is over," he continued, half to himself; "it is very dismal here."

A wild, lonesome cry broke upon the stillness of the night-air—a prolonged shriek, as if from one in mortal agony. An old proverb says: "All unknown cries are terrible in the night." The American slightly started; the commandante could not conceal his agitation, the color faded from his lips; the cry seemed to his soul, not altogether free from crime, like a warning from the other world.

"Jesu, save us!" cried he; "what was that? It sounded like the cry of an unquiet spirit!"

"It was the cry of a wolf, señor. You are not accustomed to the savanna, or it would not have terrified you!" said Arthur, with a quiet laugh of contempt. He thought the commandante a coward. There he was wrong. Don Miguel feared nothing living; 'twas the inhabitants of another world he dreaded.

"Terrified!" he cried; "Caramba! I fear not you, nor your sword, señor!"

"Save your boasts until the fight is over," replied Arthur, coldly. "Prepare, sir; the night is going fast."

"In five minutes I shall be at your service," said Miguel.

Arthur seated himself upon a rock and commenced to take



off his hunting-shirt, while Miguel was stripping off his jacket on the other side of the little open space.

"So, the handle of his saber is broken," mused Miguel. "Even if the 'Wolf' fails me, I may prove the victor, supposing that he is my equal in the art of fence, which I doubt. But, if the 'Red Coyote' be near at hand, how can I be certain of the fact?" Miguel tapped his forehead with his forefinger, as if to aid his wit; suddenly the idea came. He remembered his campaign against the brigands—how a peon in the secrets of the ladrones sold their signal-cry, by means of which he was enabled to gain their stronghold. The signal of the brigands was three strokes of steel upon steel, the answer, the note of the Mexican nightingale, twice repeated. "How to give the signal," said Miguel to himself, "without exciting his suspicions?"

Miguel drew a small hunting-knife from his belt, and resting the hilt of his sword upon a rock, struck the blade a half a dozen times or more with the knife. Of these blows, three were loud and distinct above the rest. Miguel paused and listened.

A slight sound wavered on the night air; it came from the upper rocks, through the dark, spreading branches. The sound was like that which a bird might make, passing through the leaves of the pinion tree. The noise attracted Kenton's attention, and he raised his head to listen. The commandante also listened with eager attention.

The noise ceased; the note of a bird sounded faintly on the air. Once—twice—it came to the ears of the two watchers; it was the cry of the nightingale!

A fierce joy crept over Miguel's soul; his foe was in his power—naught could save him!

Miguel tightened his sash around his waist, rolled up the sleeves of his white shirt, and with his handkerchief, began to secure his sword to his hand.

Kenton had taken the same precautions, and was just finishing the tying of his sword. Busy thoughts had filled his brain as he sat there in the cañon, preparing for the fight. The sound of the bird's-cry at such an hour, and in such a place, although it was the note of a night-bird, excited his suspicions. "Could the commandante mean treachery?" he



murmured to himself; "and if he does, how will it come, and in what shape?"

His eye wandered to the mouth of the cavern. A foe, to reach him, must first cross the bridge, then descend by the rocks. An Indian or a white, highly skilled in woodcraft, alone could do it, without noise. Then he surveyed the commandante, stripping and preparing for the fight.

In size the American had much the advantage, being taller than the Don and more powerfully-built in every respect—in youth, too, being hardly more than half the age of his foe. It was an unequal contest in these respects; but, in another the commandante had the advantage. From early youth he had been expert in the use of the saber, while the American was not an adept.

Kenton knew his danger, and had determined upon his course of action. The moment they crossed blades he resolved to close in at once with the Spaniard.

Arthur had fastened the saber but loosely to his hand, so as to disengage it easily in the coming struggle, and now, the moment before the deadliest peril of his life, his thoughts wandered to the memory of a woman, and her face was before him, even 'mid the gloom of the dark cañon.

What woman was it, that, with death could share his thoughts in this hour of danger? Was it Manuelita, the beautiful Mexican girl? She to whom he owed his present position—for the sake of whose smiles he was to do battle unto the death?

No!

The face before him was of dusker hue than even the brown-skinned Mexican's. The red of the Indian, blended with the white of the Spaniard, was in the face before him. The long, dark hair with wavy curl was not the perfumed locks of beauty's belle. Those deep black eyes, that, from the darkness of the night, looked into his, speaking whole worlds of love in one little glance, never had sparkled in the mazes of the Mexican fandango; their brightness came from the open air, the blue sky, the dark woods and limpid waters, the wilderness of the prairie. The face was Lupah's! The Flower of the Prairie held possession of the thoughts of the gold-hunter!



"Strange," he thought, "that, in this hour of danger, I should think of the Indian girl instead of her I fight for!"

"Come, señor, are you ready?" demanded Miguel, rising and placing himself on guard. "Attack, señor!"

The commandante's eyes flashed with excitement, and the shrill, metallic tone of his voice rung out clear and loud.

Kenton grasped his saber with muscles of steel, and with a terrible blow leaped upon his foe. The attack had come—but not in the way that Miguel had expected. Although on guard, and with not a point of his body exposed, yet the suddenness of the onset had taken him by surprise; the terrific head-blow dealt him by Kenton he neatly parried, but the next moment, ere he could draw back his saber from the blade of his adversary, the Kentuckian closed with him. Now it was hand to hand; sword skill was useless; Miguel had found his master! Here and there, in the little open space lit by the rays of the moon, these two men struggled in their deadly encounter. A moment locked in a close embrace, and Miguel found his strength giving way before the firm pressure of the gold-hunter. The commandante tried all the wiles of the wrestler's art that he could master, but the Kentuckian held his own, firm as rock. Another desperate struggle by Miguel to break Kenton's iron grasp; they twine around each other like two snakes; a moment more, and Kenton raises Miguel in his arms like a child, and then dashes him to the earth, stunned and bleeding. The struggle had ended; force had triumphed over skill.

Kenton stepped forward and stood beside his fallen foe. Miguel was recovering fast from the effects of the shock.

Whiz! went something through the air and through the gloom of the cañon! The "Red Coyote" had cast his lasso from the pinion bridge, and Kenton, to his amazement, found his arms tightened to his side, as though in a coil of steel. In vain were his struggles; a moment more he was dragged from his feet and thrown backward on the rocks with a force that stunned him. The "Coyote" had captured his victim by the same process that he would have used to insnare a wild horse on the prairie. In the hands of a Mexican, trained from boyhood to its use, the lasso is a fearful weapon—noiseless but deadly.



The "Coyote," crossing the tree bridge, descended to the bottom of the cañon. Miguel had regained his feet, and now stood gazing upon his prostrate foe with a triumphant smile.

Kenton, recovering his senses, realized his situation at a glance, and his heart told him that he had little mercy to hope for at Miguel's hand.

"I have kept my word," said the "Coyote," "and have delivered your foe into your power."

"Thanks!" replied the commandante. "You see, American, that your life is in my hands."

"Assassin and coward that you are!" was Kenton's only reply.

The "Coyote" drawing a leathern cord from his pocket, he and Miguel commenced to bind the hunter's arms. Vain was Kenton's resistance; he was overpowered by superior strength. They bound his arms securely together behind his back, then removed the lasso.

"Commandante," said the "Coyote," "I leave you to deal with the North American. I will await you at the entrance to the cavern." And with a parting glance at their victim, the brigand ascended the rocks. "He is too brave for such a fate," he muttered, as he crossed the pinion tree, and for the last time looked down at the living tableau formed at the bottom of the cañon. "I pity but I can not save him."

The tall form of the "Coyote" was then lost to the sight of the two actors in the tragedy to come in the dark void below.

Miguel watched the brigand until he disappeared in the darkness, then paced slowly back to the side of the American, and leaned carelessly upon his saber.

"Well!" cried Kenton; "for what do you wait? Assassin, do you fear to strike me, even when I am bound and helpless at your feet?"

"Taunt on, Señor American," replied Miguel, in a calm tone. "You call me assassin and yet my sword shall not be stained with your blood. Assassin! well, words are but air, and air is nothing. I do not intend, myself, to take your life. I will leave you as you are, unhurt, without a wound—my vengeance will be trifling but very sweet."

There was a strain of cold, devilish glee in the quiet tones



of Miguel's voice. He continued: "I will merely relate to you a legend of this place. I will tell you why it is called the Cañon of Death. Some years ago a solitary hunter strayed into this ravine, when the shades of night were gathering close over the earth. He was fatigued; here was shelter and safety, and he laid himself down to sleep. He did not know that through this chasm in the rocks, the waters of the morass above found their way. Yonder they drip down, sparkling in the moonbeams, and yet they bear with them the seeds of death. The thin vapor that arises from yonder sluggish stream is poisonous to the life-blood of man. The hunter was found in the morning dead. Now do you know the reason why this place is called the Cañon of Death? Can you guess my vengeance?"

"Yes!" replied Arthur, unable, brave as he was, to repress the shudder that crept over him.

"And do you not fear?"

"All men must die some time; it is our fate."

"You are a brave man!" said Miguel; "but you crossed my line of life and we could not both live. You may perhaps free yourself from those bonds, but it will avail you but little, as after I cross yonder tree which serves as a bridge, I shall hurl it from its place into the cañon. That bridge once destroyed, a bird alone can reach the world again from the bottom of the ravine."

The commandante left the side of his victim and commenced to climb the rocks. He gained the pinion tree, crossed it and stood upon the ledge of rocks whereon the butt of the tree rested. The ledge was small, and the tree barely held its place upon it. Miguel selected a broken branch that lay near at hand, and using it as a lever, pried the tree from its place; a moment he exerted his strength, then the tree swayed slowly from the rock; then gaining force, it tore down the ledges and broke into a hundred pieces. The bridge was destroyed—the American left to die—a helpless victim to the fever-king!

Miguel stood for a single moment on the rock, while his dark face lit up with a smile of joy.

"Farewell, American!" he cried; then disappeared in the darkness.



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE LOVE THAT SAVES!

STRANGE were the thoughts that passed through Kenton's brain as he lay at the bottom of the cañon, bound and helpless. Was this to be the end of his life—to perish by inches, the slow fever-poison creeping through and destroying the channels of his blood? And then his thoughts went back to his old Kentucky home—to many friends who had bid him "God speed" in his perilous venture toward the far Western land. To die thus, helpless, without even a struggle for his life was madness. And then he cursed his own folly, that led him to meet the wily commandante alone. He saw that he had been betrayed to his death—that Miguel and the stranger, Morales, were in league; and he thought with regret of stout-hearted Pete, his trusty friend in many a desperate encounter, and how different the end of the struggle would have been had Pete been by his side.

But it was useless regretting now—it was too late—too late! Fatal words, that many a poor human had spoken to himself ere now! A face, too, came before him—a face radiant in all the pride of youth and loveliness, although the cheeks had been kissed by the sun-god and the red blood of the Indian mingled with that of the Spaniard within her veins. 'Twas the face of Lupah, the Flower of the Prairie. Never again should he look upon that face!

Now a new feeling came upon him; there seemed to be a difficulty in breathing, and a dull pain came to his head. Could it be possible that the vapor had begun to act upon his system so soon? He began a desperate struggle for freedom; he strove by means of the sharp rocks to cut the cord that bound his arms and wrists together, but the untanned leather was tough and not easily severed. Then he tried his strength in a vain effort to burst the thong. Useless struggle! The "Coyote" had bound him so skillfully that not a single inch did the cord give way.



Wearied, at length, he gave up the attempt. There was no disguising the truth: Death was indeed near at hand. A strange numbness began to take possession of him; he felt that sleep was coming over him—not the healthy refreshing sleep that gives new life to the wearied frame, but a strange, unnatural sleep—a sleep that, in his soul, he felt was but the warning of the approach of death. He struggled against it. He tried, but almost in vain, to keep his eyelids from closing. He felt that his strength was leaving him. Strange fancies passed across his mind. It seemed as if some one was near at hand—a voice was whispering in his ear! He knew that it was a delusion, and yet could not shake off the lethargy. The fever was upon him. Images of death were hovering about his head!

Had Kenton's brain not been so filled with the poisonous influences of the fever-vapor, he might have heard a slight noise at the mouth of the cañon, as a light form brushed through the plants of the cactus. That form bent over the rocks and cast a searching glance down into the darkness of the cañon; and when, by the light of the moonbeams that strayed within the hollow, the glance perceived the figure of the American bound and helpless on the rocks below, a moan of anguish swelled on the night, and in a tone full of sorrow, the voice of Lupah—for it was the Indian girl—cried:

"Arthur!" And the echo of the cañon took up the cry until it seemed to the heated mind of the hapless hunter—for the sound had reached him—as if a chorus of spirits were hovering about his head and mournfully chanting his name.

"Arthur!" Again the moaning came on the night-air. 'Twas no dream.

With a mighty struggle—a struggle which taxed all the power of the hunter, he roused himself from his deathlike sleep.

"Who calls?" he cried.

"'Tis I, Lupah—the 'Flower of the Prairie!'" came in a clear tone from the mouth of the cañon.

"Lupah!" exclaimed Kenton, vainly attempting to look upward through the darkness.

"Yes, I will save you!"



"You? impossible!" returned Arthur, feeling himself stronger even at this faint prospect of escape. "The Commandante has destroyed the bridge, and the rocks are too steep for human foot to descend."

"Lupah is the child of the prairie!" answered the "Flower," drawing herself up proudly; "she loves the white hunter and that love shall save him!"

A grape-vine spanned the chasm. This the alert girl severed with her knife, and with the agility of a squirrel, using the ledges as resting-places for her feet, she soon stood upon the platform below, much to the hunter's astonishment. In an instant she was at his side.

"Dear Arthur! Me save! Lupah's feet have wings when Arthur calls!"

"Brave girl!" the hunter responded, as he clasped her in his arms.

"Quick! No stop here! Death sleeps in the air! Follow Lupah!"

She sprung to the friendly vine, and with its aid quickly clambered up the rocky wall. Arthur followed, and soon both stood upon the chasm's rim.

The winged feet of love had saved him.

"Where will you go?" questioned Lupah.

"Indeed, I do not know," returned Arthur, thoughtfully. "If I return to the village, I shall but place myself within the power of the commandante, for he is all-powerful there."

"Why not come with me?" asked the girl, raising her full, dark eyes to him with a glance of entreaty.

"With you? Where?"

"To my home on the prairie! You will be safe there. Oh, do come. Then I can watch over you."

The grateful hunter looked upon the sweet face of the girl by his side who had risked her life for him and saved him from such a terrible death; his heart answered the question that he had asked hours before at the fandango. *This was the one he loved!*

"Lupah!" he said, "I will go with you!"

"I am so glad," she answered in her simple, childish way.

"I will try and make you happy, and some day, when you are



far, far away, perhaps in your own home, among your own people, you will think of the poor Indian girl who would gladly die for you."

"Think of you, Lupah!" he replied with warmth. "I shall never forget you. But for your timely aid to-morrow's light would have found me cold and still in death. Lupah, while I live I shall never forget you."

"Now I am happy!"

And the pure face of the Prairie Flower gave assurance that she spoke the truth.

"And is that all that is required to make you happy?" asked Arthur, gazing down upon the little face upturned to his.

"Yes, you are all the world to me. I care for no one else. Why should I? Did you not save my life? Does it not then belong to you? Come!" she added, quickly; "will you go now? Are you strong?"

"Yes," he answered; "I am unhurt, save a slight bruise on the head, which a day or so will heal."

They left the grove that clustered round the mouth of the cañon and gained the open country, when they proceeded onward with rapid steps.

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The "Wolf" had waited for Miguel on the outskirts of the little wood. When he came up, they sauntered along slowly and finally paused for conference in the shadow of a thicket. A half-hour had not passed, when the "Coyote" suddenly exclaimed:

"Hush! Look at the prairie—those two figures."

"Where?" asked Miguel.

"To the left!" said the "Coyote."

As the moon's rays flooded the prairie, making it nearly as light as day, Miguel and the "Coyote" beheld two figures moving over the prairie.

"It is the American!" muttered Miguel, in rage, between his firm-set teeth.

"Yes," said the "Coyote," "I know him by his dress. But the Indian girl; she must have saved him. Who is she?"

"She is called Lupah, and by the Indians the Flower of the



Prairie!" answered the commandante, still watching them with eager eyes.

"Lupah!" said the "Coyote," thoughtfully and half to himself. "Lupah!" he repeated again; "strange how familiar that name is to me, and yet I think that I have never heard it before."

"Caramba!" muttered Miguel; "the devil himself aids this cursed North American. What evil power brought the Indian girl to the Cañon of Death on this night?"

"The first move of the game has failed; try a second, señor."

"I will," said the commandante. "She is bearing off toward her home."

"And where is that?"

"'Tis a lonely hut on the borders of the savanna. He is still in our power. The hut is surrounded by a rude fence, then a strip of open country and then a chapparal. By day-break I'll have a watch set upon the hut; if the American leaves it I'll track him; if he remains there, to-night I will surround it with a file of soldiers. I'll post them by the chapparal. You, with another file, can assault the house and drive them forth; he, alone and unprotected, will fall an easy prey."

The face of Miguel brightened up with joy, as he explained his plan.

"Good!" cried the "Coyote;" "you plan well, señor commandante. But the girl—what shall be done with her?"

"Spare her!" exclaimed Miguel. "I would not for a hundred golden ounces that a hair of her head should be harmed. Though she be a half-breed, there's not a maiden in yonder valley that is prettier than she. In faith, I almost love her!"

"Indeed!" and a slight sneer appeared on the face of the "Coyote." "I thought the haughty Manuelita was queen of your thoughts."

"My heart is so large," replied Miguel, with a quiet smile, "that I can love two at the same time with ease! But come, let us return to the village. I have a shrewd fellow, named Diaz, in the garrison, whose foot is as light as a wolf's, and



whose hearing is as keen as that of a deer. I'll set him as a spy on the American."

"That is good; and, commandante, I have a favor to ask of you. I will tell you as we walk along."

Miguel and the "Coyote," proceeded once again toward the village.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE TRAIL OF BLOOD.

THE two men proceeded for a while in silence, each busy with his own thoughts.

Miguel, the commandante, was not altogether easy in his mind. The escape of the American annoyed him. A deadly and a dangerous foe was at liberty. Manuelita, too, was in his thoughts. In the dance of the fandango, he fancied that she was colder and more distant to him than was her wont. Could she love the American already? It might be, and Miguel smiled grimly to himself as he thought of a means to force her to love him, despite herself.

"Morales," said Miguel, at length, "you said you had a favor to ask; what is it?"

"I will tell you. Is there not in the garrison a list of all the officers that have ever held command there?"

"Yes," replied the commandante, "our roster-book."

"Good; my wish is to see that book."

"That is a strange wish—why is it?"

"Because," replied the "Coyote," his brow clouding, "I too, like you, have a foe, and his name is in that book. 'Tis the only clue I have to find him."

"Small hope of that; he may be in distant lands."

"And if he is," cried the "Wolf," in a deep, intense tone, "destiny will lead me to him. The avenging fates above will slowly bring our lines of life together, and he will walk blindly on, unconscious that, stanch as the prairie-wolf on the trail of the wounded buffalo, I follow in his track, thirsting for his blood."



"I promise you my aid," said Miguel, "and you shall see the book."

"What are your intentions regarding Manuelita, if, as I think, she loves the American?"

"I shall remove him to-night," said Miguel, with a quiet smile, as though the American's life was of no more value than that of a rabbit. "And as for Manuelita, I do not intend that she shall have a choice as to whether she becomes mine or no."

"I do not understand you. Surely, if she refuses, you can not force her to become yours?"

"I can!"

"But how?"

"I will explain: Manuelita has caught my fancy, I own, and I am determined that she shall be mine. Her beauty has fired my heart, or rather my passion"—Miguel was honest with himself—"for I have no heart. That is one reason. Another, her father, Señor Torrejon, is the richest man in the province of Sonora, and I would be his son-in-law. Though commandante of Serie, I am not rich in purse, and his fat herds, broad acres and golden ounces will descend to Manuelita, who is his only child. Thus, you see, there are several reasons why I should win her."

"True," said "Coyote," thoughtfully. "But the means?"

"You remember Hidalgo's mad attempt at revolution against Spanish rule here in Mexico?"

"Yes," replied the brigand. "I was in his army when he was defeated at the Bridge."

"Guerrero, another mad republican, is, even now, up in arms in Leon, proclaiming liberty to Mexico. And even here in Sonora there is a conspiracy against the Spanish rule. Guerrero's success in Leon has encouraged them, and they meditate a rising."

"But," said the "Coyote," thoughtfully, "what has this to do with Señor Torrejon?"

"Nothing, save that he is one of the leaders of the conspiracy!" replied Miguel, in his quiet tone, that was so full of meaning and of menace.

"Aha!" cried the brigand, "and you have the proof of this?"



"In his own handwriting. Judge, then, whether, in the game for the hand of the proud and haughty Manuelita, I do not hold the winning suit!"

"How got you this proof?"

"A traitor," replied Miguel, "as is always the case in all conspiracies. A wealthy Mexican, Gallejos by name, and a rank coward; yet he is one of the leaders of the revolt and trusted with the papers containing the design of the rising, and the names, in their own handwriting, of all the conspirators. The plan is simple. I have hardly thirty men in the fort, having dispatched the greater part of my command to Leon, to aid the viceroy, who has taken the field against Guerrero in person. The conspirators are fifty strong in Serie. They intend to rise and surprise the fort to-morrow night—an easy task, with their superior number, had I not been warned. In the fort they were to secure arms and ammunition; then all that could be spared were to join Guerrero in Leon."

"And you?" questioned the "Coyote."

"I was to be offered the command of the party for Leon; if I refused, they were to shoot me in the market-place as a warning to all Spaniards."

"And now?"

"I shall probably have the pleasure of shooting half a dozen or so of these gentle Mexicans instead," replied Miguel, in his usual courtly tone.

"You are a strange man, commandante," said the "Coyote."

"Why strange? Because I shoot these gentlemen, who, had they the power, would shoot me instead? 'Tis the policy of Spain. Should we pardon, they might rebel again; dead, they can not do so."

"A wise policy!"

"A certain one. In the grave all men are still. If they were not—could they strike us from the grave—I fear my life would be worth but little to me."

"Some men do strike even from the tomb!" rejoined the "Coyote," solemnly.

"How so?"

"They may leave a legacy of vengeance to another."



"Yes, in the Corsican style ; but we are not in Corsica."

"No," said the "Wolf"; "but on this continent we have a race as constant in hatred, as certain in vengeance, and as patient in waiting for the time, as a Corsican."

"Whom do you mean?"

"The Horse Indians. Wrong an Apache or Comanche brave, and you wrong his whole tribe. Death alone can efface it."

The face of the commandante clouded. "You speak as though you knew the habits of the Indians well."

"I do," answered the "Coyote"; "I am half an Indian myself."

"You?" questioned Miguel, in surprise.

"Yes, I am a half-breed."

"Indeed!"

"Do you not see my dusky face? 'Tis not the effect of the sun, but the color of the Indian blood within my veins," said the "Coyote."

"You are a half-breed, then?"

"Yes—the son of a Spaniard and an Indian girl!"

Miguel started as though he had trodden upon a serpent.

"The foe I am seeking now is not *my* foe—that is, he did not wrong me but my father. The blow that I shall strike him comes, in reality, from the grave, and is death by the arm of a dead man. I am but the humble instrument."

"Your mother, you say, was an Indian girl?"

"Yes," answered the "Wolf."

"And her tribe? Was she an Apache?"

"No!" said the "Coyote."

The commandante seemed disappointed yet relieved by the answer. He thought for a moment, then spoke:

"Your face is strangely familiar to me. Are you a native of Leon?"

"No," answered the "Coyote." "Durango is my native province."

"Ah! I was wrong then."

"Commandante," said the "Coyote," "I have still another favor to ask."

"What is it?"



"I would have a full pardon from the viceroy for my past deeds."

"You shall have it. I dispatch a courier to-morrow for Leon, and he shall bring back the pardon."

"Thanks; and any service that I can do you in return, command me."

"I shall not forget your promise," said Miguel.

'Twas just eleven when the commandante and the "Coyote" reached the hacienda of Señor Torrejon. The fandango was still going on.

"Come," said Miguel, throwing off his gloom, "let us join once more in the dance. I'll enjoy Señor Torrejon's hospitality to-night; although I may shoot him in the market-place to-morrow."

The two men entered the ball-room. No one could have guessed from the manner of Don Miguel or from the gay and dashing gallantry of Señor Morales, that an hour before they had attempted to destroy a human life.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BEWARE!

'Twas the afternoon succeeding the night of the fandango. A bright, beautiful day. All nature seemed rejoicing in the sunlight, and yet in Serie's pleasant valley there were aching hearts.

First there came honest Pete. He had not missed Arthur, until the close of the fandango—so occupied had he been with his pretty little brown-eyed partner; but, at the end of the dance, he had searched for him in vain. Concluding at last that he had gone to the cosy little tavern, in which they had taken up their quarters during their stay in Serie, he sought for him there, but in vain. Thinking then that he had accepted the hospitality of some Mexican friend for the night, Pete retired to rest.

The morning came but no Arthur. Pete inquired of all



their new-made friends, but no trace of the absent one could be found.

As the afternoon came on, Pete determined in despair to visit Señor Torrejon's house, thinking that Arthur might possibly have left some word there for him. He shrewdly thought that, if there had been a love-passage between the Mexican girl, Manuelita, and his friend, as the pretty Rita had hinted, Manuelita, of all persons in the world, would be the most apt to know the whereabouts of her lover.

Pete, however, was of a bashful nature, and would have sooner given his ears than have gone straight to the house and made known his object. So he approached it slowly and by degrees, and at last found himself near the garden wall at the back of the hacienda. And there, in an open doorway, stood his partner of last night—the brown-eyed Rita.

Rita perceived him at once, and signed to him to approach. Pete did so, with a good-natured grin upon his honest face.

"Health be with you, señor!" cried the girl.

"Same to you, sunflower, and lots of it!" responded Pete.

"Oh, señor—I'm so glad you've come!" said the maiden archly, a merry light dancing in her bright eyes.

"Are you? Wal, I ain't sorry to hear you say so," said Pete, looking quite sheepish at the idea.

"Yes, I should have sought you in the village, but that ugly lieutenant has been walking near the house all day, and I detest him, because he says that all Americans are heretics and devils!" and the great brown eyes opened wide at the idea.

"He says so, does he?" said Pete. "I reckon if he says any thing of that sort to me, that there'll be a chance for a promotion in his regiment 'fore long! A devil—eh? Jumping ginger! but that's an aspersion on our national character. See here, sunflower; do you think I look like a devil?"

"Oh, no, señor! Besides, I shouldn't like you if you did," responded Rita, looking at him with those winning eyes, that, as Pete afterward said, "eat a hole right through his hunting-shirt into his heart."

"That's as much as to say, that you *do* like me, eh?" questioned Pete, getting very red in the face and feeling quite uncomfortable about the region of the heart.



"Why señor!" and the brown eyes were cast demurely on the ground; "if you say so, it must be so!" and then the eyes took a shy glance under their long, dark lashes at Pete's half comical face. That look was too much for our hunter. "Ginger!" he said to himself; "ef I stay 'round here much longer, I'll have to marry this gal!"

"You like me to like you, do you not, señor?" questioned the little maid.

"Yes," said Pete, emphatically. "I think a heap of you. Ef I don't, why you can make me up into corn-dodgers and grind me right up in a grist-mill!"

"A heap?" said Rity, with wonder. "That means a great deal, doesn't it?"

"Jes' so! I reckon it does down in ole Kentuck. But, see here, sunflower; has my friend Arthur been here to-day?"

"You mean the other American?" questioned the girl.

"Yes. Has he been to see your mistress to-day?"

"No, señor," said Rita; "and that was the reason I was wishing to see you, as my mistress thought it strange that the señor did not keep his word and visit her this afternoon, as he promised last night at the fandango."

"Did he promise to come?"

"Yes, señor."

"Wal, that beats all!" said Pete, half aloud and half to himself. "I never knew Art to break a promise before. Something must have happened. Ef he's come to harm I shall never get over it!"

"Oh señor! do you think that?" and Rita paused, not daring to utter her thoughts.

"I don't know what to think, sunflower. There's only one thing clear to my mind, and that is that Art has gone *somewhere*. He ain't in the village, I know, 'cause I've been all over it. And why should he go off without sayin' somethin' to me? He knows I love him jist like a brother," and the rough but honest voice of Pete trembled as he thought of his lost friend.

"What will you do, señor?" asked Rita, looking at him with her large, soft eyes full of pity.

"Do! I'll hunt up Art, ef he's 'bove ground!" replied



Pete, with energy. "Good-by, sunflower. I'll be back here 'bout nine to-night, and by that time I may find him!"

"Well, señor, I'll be here at nine," said Rita, acceding to the appointment, while a rosy blush appeared upon her brown cheek at the prospect of another interview with the handsome North American, as she had termed Pete in her own heart, which had made quite a hero of the Kentuckian.

Pete, with a farewell look, walked down the little lane and then turned into the grand square of the village. He had resolved to examine the surrounding country for traces of Arthur, as he had been unable to find any clue within the village. In accordance with this idea, he took the main road leading to the prairie, first stopping at the little inn and securing his trusty rifle—a weapon that, save within a village as now, he was seldom seen without.

We will leave Pete to continue his search, and return to Rita.

The brown eyes of the Mexican girl followed Pete's retreating figure with delight.

"Oh! he's so handsome and so brave!" she said to herself, half aloud.

"Do you think so?" said a shrill voice close to her side. "He's a coward and a heretic!"

Rita turned in astonishment, and in some little alarm beheld a soldier of the garrison leaning on his musket, a few paces from the doorway. He had evidently come round the garden wall and approached unperceived, as she exchanged her parting words with Pete. His name was Tio Lasca—a soldier by profession and a vagabond by birth—a worthless, drunken rascal, as ugly, too, as could be conceived. His hair was red and cut close to his head, while a dirty beard, of the same fiery hue as his hair, adorned his chin. His face, beard and uniform—if such a motley collection of patches could be called a uniform—were stained with the traces of liquor.

"You're no judge of manly beauty," he continued, assuming a gallant bearing and endeavoring to stand steady. "Look at me! I'm a handsome man—just look at the curl of this mustache! My dear, if you want to kiss me, I've no objection."

"Kiss you!" cried Rita, in disgust. "Kiss a pig!"



"You call me a pig?" exclaimed Tio, in profound astonishment. "Do you dare to call one of the gallant and noble soldiers of his most Catholic majesty of Spain, a *pig*? That's high treason! If you don't come and kiss me I'll have your head cut off!"

"You are in liquor!" replied Rita, indignant.

"In liquor, eh? That's a polite way of sayin' that I'm drunk, I suppose?" and the worthy Tio grew wroth at the idea. "I drunk! I! the flower of Spanish gallants—the bravest soldier in Mexico! Woman, that's an insult. If you were only a man I'd settle you!"

"I wish I were a man, just for five minutes, and you would get what you deserve, you ladrone!"

Rita's mild brown eyes flashed fire as she gazed at the war-like representative of the Spanish rule.

"What?" cried Tio, unable, seemingly, to believe his own ears. "Do you, a vile female Mexican, dare to call me, a good loyal Spaniard, a robber? In the name of the king, I arrest you!"

As the worthy Spaniard advanced with unsteady steps to execute his threat, Rita sprung within the doorway and shut the heavy door in his face. Being within the doorway, the shock staggered him into the middle of the lane, where, unable to retain his balance, he fell at full length in the dust. Recovering himself, with a look of drunken wisdom upon his bloated and stolid features, he said:

"On the whole—upon deliberate reflection—I think I'll let that girl go." Which was a wise conclusion on the part of the gallant Tio. "What the devil does the sergeant mean, by putting me here to guard old Torrejon's hacienda? Let me see: his orders were, if anybody came from the house, to fire my musket and give an alarm. Good! No one can do that better than myself. I wish I had some mescal; my throat's as dry as a watercourse in summer."

Rita, after closing the gate, ran across the garden and entered the house. She found her mistress in the great room, where the fandango had taken place the previous night. Manuelita was seated by the table. The sole trace of last night's fête was a large vase, filled with fragrant flowers.

Manuelita's face was sad; a feeling of impending evil had



taken possession of her mind. Vainly she strove to shake it off, but the weight was on her soul.

Arthur had not come!

In that little sentence was the secret of the gloom which hung like an icy pall over the spirit of the fair Mexican girl.

Her lover had not kept his word.

Her lover?

The American had never said he loved her, but she loved him and believed that, in his eyes, she read the return of that love. In his eyes?

Arthur had not come!

Arthur was love—and in that warm, passionate land, love was life!

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE WHITE FLOWER THAT GIVES THE ANSWER.

"OH, señora!" cried the girl, "I have seen the American!"

"Arthur?" exclaimed Manuelita, and the warm color flushed her forehead.

"No, señora!" said Rita. "'Twas the other American. He came to find his friend."

"And does he not know where he is?"

"No, señora; he has not seen him since the fandango last evening, and he is very anxious about him, for he is such a good young man, and he loves his friend dearly."

The peon girl, though unconscious of the fact, could not help praising the man *she* loved.

Manuelita's heart sunk within her. Arthur gone, and his only friend not know his whereabouts. There was, then, some serious reason in his absence—and the quick instinct of the woman told her that that reason was a foe! Yet the American was a stranger, apparently a favorite with all.

The memory of a look flashed across her mind—that look which Miguel, the commandante, bestowed on the American, the night before at the fandango, when he gave up his place by her side to Arthur! Then, too, she remembered that, after



Arthur had left, the commandante also had disappeared, and was not seen again till near the close of the fandango! Simple girl though she was, with no knowledge of the world beyond her village home, yet the subtle power—call it instinct or what you will—that lurks within the brain of womankind, had revealed to her the truth. The commandante loved her; the commandante was Arthur's foe.

"Señora," said Rita, who had looked from the window into the square, "yonder comes the commandante."

It was so, and with Don Miguel, yet loitering along behind, as if they were walking for their own amusement and not on his service, came two soldiers of the garrison. They had their muskets with them, and were armed with the saber beside—something unusual for a soldier, when not on duty.

"The commandante!" exclaimed Manuelita, and his presence at this moment when her thoughts were busy concerning him seemed to confirm her suspicions.

"Yes, señora, he is coming here."

"Here?"

"Yes; even now he is at the door. Will you see him, señora?" asked the waiting-maid.

"Yes," answered Manuelita; "conduct him here."

Rita left the room.

"He comes to tell me of Arthur!" cried the maiden, in answer to her thoughts. "I am sure of it, but the news he brings will be bad news!"

"Health be with you, señora!" said the quiet voice of the commandante, as he entered the apartment, and bowed low, while his plumed hat swept the floor.

"Be seated, señor," replied Manuelita, rising to receive her guest and fixing her full, dark eyes upon him searchingly.

"Thanks!" responded Miguel, accepting the proffered seat, while he gazed with undisguised admiration upon the peerless beauty before him—that beauty that he was determined to win and wear.

Manuelita cast down her eyes before his ardent look.

"Do you wish to see my father, señor?" she asked. "I will call him."

"Stay!" he cried. "I do wish to see your father; but you first. May I beg you to be seated?"



She complied with his wish.

"Now or never!" thought Miguel to himself, as he noted the beauty of her whom he had steeped his soul in crime to gain. A moment's pause, then he spoke. His voice was like music in its softness.

"Manuelita," he said, "can you not guess what I am about to say? Manuelita, I love you!"

The maiden started, but she answered not, and her eyes were bent upon the ground.

"Manuelita, I love you!" he repeated. "Not with the common love that is usually felt by man, but with a deep, intense, passionate devotion, such a love as a mortal feels but once in his life! You are the goddess before whom I bow low in adoration. Manuelita," and his voice was full of pride and strength, "my love is not like the summer stream that a stone may turn from its path, but 'tis like the torrent rushing from the mountain, that sweeps even rocks from its way."

He paused, but Manuelita answered not.

"Manuelita, will you not be my wife?" he asked, softening his voice to low entreaty—"not the wife of a mere commandante—but the wife of the Governor of Sonora."

The maiden raised her head; astonishment, not love, was in her face. Had not the commandante been blind in his own conceit, as all men are sometime in their lives, no matter how wise or cunning, he might have seen that his suit was hopeless.

"You Governor of our province?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered. "Some time since I discovered a dangerous conspiracy against Spanish rule, here in Sonora. I instantly informed the viceroy and took measures to suppress it at the moment of breaking forth. In reward for my services to my king and country, I have been appointed Governor of this province. Therefore, Manuelita, I can make you the wife of him who has but one superior in all Mexico, and he is the Viceroy of Spain. Then say, Manuelita, will you love me?—will you be my wife?"

And thus again the commandante pressed his question and waited for his answer. It came at length.

"Don Miguel," said the señora, raising her eyes to his with



a steady gaze; "I am deeply sensible of the honor you would confer upon me, but I must decline it."

"Decline!" cried Miguel, in astonishment, and yet he had expected that she would refuse the offer, for he was certain that she loved the American; but he was one of those men who never admit the possibility of defeat.

"Yes, señor," continued the maiden; "I am sorry, but it must be so."

"And the reason?"

"You ask that?"

"Yes!"

"And why?" questioned Manuelita.

"Because I have been plain and fair with you. It is but right, if you refuse me, that you should tell me the reason why!"

"You claim it as a right, señor?"

"I do!" answered Miguel, calmly.

"Well then, I do not love you."

"That is no reason, because, in time, you may learn to love me," replied the commandante, coolly.

"Impossible!" cried Manuelita, almost without thinking of what she was saying.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Miguel, quickly, feeling that she had betrayed herself. "Not unless you love another?"

"And if I do?" questioned Manuelita, all the pride within her slender frame roused at the cross-questioning of the commandante.

"I would simply say that you can not!" The voice of Miguel was not soft now, but firm and quick like a rapier's stroke. "There is but one man whom you have loved, whom perhaps you do love, but whom, in the future, you can not love!"

"*Can not!*" and the proud Mexican beauty rose to her feet, her full, dark eyes flashing fire, and the hot blood surging through her veins. "*Can not!*" she repeated. "Señor, what mean you?"

The commandante gazed at the passionate girl with longing eyes; he had never seen her look so beautiful before. Anger improved her.

"Manuelita," he said, "I told you that my love was strong



—was powerful. A man stood between you and me in the way of that love, and, like the mountain stream unto the rock, I swept him from my path !”

Manuelita stood for a moment like one stunned by a heavy blow, and as the truth seemed slowly to take possession of her mind, she said never a word but sunk back in her chair and covered her face with her hands. The commandante watched her with a pitiless smile.

“ You see, Manuelita,” he said, his voice again changing to the soft, wooing tone, “ my love is great.”

“ His love !” The thought flashed through the brain of the Mexican girl as swift as the lightning-stroke, and like that, left a burning scar behind. It roused all the bitter elements of her nature.

“ Coward !” she cried, forcing back, with a mighty effort, the hot tears that fain would fill her eyes. “ You have murdered him ! treacherously murdered him ! You did not dare to meet him, as man meets man, sword in hand ; but you have lurked behind and stabbed him in the back ! Through your cold, glittering eyes I read your soul ! Oh, coward !”

Truth is not always pleasant. It was not in this case. The girl’s random shot had struck home to the heart of the commandante, and the cold, merciless man, who had never felt fear in many a desperate fight, now felt like a coward before a simple girl.

“ Manuelita, you wrong me !” he cried. “ I am no coward, as my deeds on the frontier have proved. You have misunderstood my words. No blood of Arthur Kenton, the American, is on my sword. I but tried you with my words. When I parted with him he was unhurt, unbarmed. I swear this is the truth, by all my hopes of a hereafter. Meanwhile, he does not love you ; he has given you up and returned to his own country beyond the prairie. Cast his love from your heart, then, and accept mine !”

“ Commandante,” said Manuelita, proudly, “ I do not believe you. You are speaking falsely ! Do not dream that you can ever win my love, for now I tell you frankly, that, though the “ gold-hunter ” has never said to me that he loved me, yet I gave him my love unsought. If he is alive, I shall see him again. If he is dead, my love shall be buried in his



grave, a prouder resting-place for that love than even thy arms."

And every moment that Miguel looked upon the inspired girl—inspired by love to heap these bitter words upon him—every moment he loved her the more.

"Manuelita," he rejoined, in a bold tone, in which, though, now and then could be detected the slight gleam and warmth of passion, "you have said that you will be frank, and I will be as honest with you. Now I tell you that every proud look you hurl, goddess-like, upon me, every bitter-sounding word that comes from your lips makes me love you more, and were I certain that one hour's possession of you would in the next be followed with all the fire of Satan's realm below, still would I claim you and gladly pay for that single hour's bliss all the tortures of this world and the one to come. Judge, then, if my passion be not fire itself. Manuelita, I love you. I love your proud spirit, and *I'll tame it!* I'll reach thee through thy father's heart."

"You?" and Manuelita's red lip curled in contempt.

"Yes, I—the scorned commandante," replied Miguel, in a tone of determination. "Be seated and listen."

Manuelita complied with the command, for such it seemed to be.

"I told you of a conspiracy," continued Miguel, "and this night it is to break forth. But, I am prepared. The hacienda of every man whose name is on this paper, is watched." As he spoke, he drew a folded paper from his belt, which he spread out upon the table before him. "The rising is to take place at nine; at seven I shall seize the leaders, the men whose names are on this list; a drumhead trial and a speedy sentence—death to all who dare the power of Spain. Before the clock strikes eight, the bullets from my soldiers' muskets will pierce the rebels' hearts—the smoke from the valley will have rolled upward on the evening air. My soldiers will cry, 'God save the king!' and the revolt and the dream of a Mexican republic both are ended!"

"What has this to do with me?" questioned Manuelita.

"Much in little," answered Miguel, with a bitter smile. "Do you see this paper?" and he motioned to the one he had spread out upon the table. "'Tis a list of the leaders of the



revolt. Will you look and see whose name is at the head?" and he turned the paper so that her eyes could see the signatures. "Do you note the name first upon the list?"

There was an expression of triumph in the cold voice of Miguel, that sent a chill to her heart. She cast her eyes upon the paper, and the first name upon the list, in the bold handwriting of her father, was, TORREJON! He was a rebel, then, and his life was forfeited.

"Aha!" cried Miguel, exulting, as the fatal list fell from her nerveless hand. "Do your eyes still see clearly, or are they clouded with the dark images of death?"

"Oh, my father!" sobbed Manuelita, the hot tears coming to the relief of her overcharged brain.

"You see, Manuelita," added Miguel, coldly, "your father's life is in my hands. By our laws he is doomed. I alone can save him. I have supreme power, and no one within the province dares to question my will. I, and I only, can save your father from a public death in the market-place. You know the conditions. Be my wife and I will save him."

Manuelita answered not—her heart was near to breaking.

Miguel grew impatient.

"Is your pride so great that, having refused me once, you can not unsay those words?"

Still no answer save tears.

"Manuelita," said Miguel, "I will not ask you to say that you will be my wife—no! See, here are flowers;" and from the vase on the table he selected a pure white lily. "See!" he said, "this flower, with its snowy whiteness, resembles the purity of your life. With your pencil write on a leaf a single 'yes;' give it then to me. 'Tis all I ask, no word need come from your lips. Your father's life will then be safe, for he will be my father also. Come, Manuelita," and the voice was low and soft; "take the flower and write."

Manuelita extended her hand, mechanically, as if her thoughts were not on the action, and took the white flower within her fingers.

"As you have said, the flower is pure and spotless; if I write.



I stain the surface—I destroy the purity, and by the action do I also destroy all the happiness of my life.”

The tone of the poor girl's voice was cold and passionless—a voice of the dead speaking from the lips of the living.

The lily dropped from her hand. The flower had spoken, and Don Miguel had received his answer.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### HO FOR THE SAVANNA !

AT this moment, and ere Miguel could speak, Señor Torrejon entered the apartment. Manuelita rushed to her father's arms with a cry of joy.

“Oh, father, save me !”

“My child, what mean you ?” asked the old man in astonishment.

“The commandante !” she sobbed.

Torrejon was perplexed.

“Señor, what does this mean ?” he questioned, turning to Miguel, who had risen at his approach, and stood with the list folded in his hands. “Commandante, can you explain ?”

“I think I can,” replied Miguel, in his usual quiet tone. “I did myself the honor to ask your daughter's hand in marriage.”

“Well ?” still questioned the old man.

“She refused,” continued Miguel. “I then took means to force her to consent.”

“Force her !” cried Torrejon, who could hardly believe what his own ears had heard.

“Ay — compel her to accept my hand !” was the commandante's deliberate answer.

“Compel !” and the old man's blood was up to fever heat. “Compel !” he repeated. “Are you out of your senses, Don Miguel, that you should use such a word, and in connection



with my daughter? Old as I am, commandante, you shall cross blades with me for this insult!"

A smile of scorn was on Miguel's face, and a lurid light was in his eye. He unfolded the paper in his hand, and then held it before Torrejon.

"Does this look like madness?" he mockingly asked.

Torrejon glanced down upon the paper—the fatal paper that held his life within its folds. Too well he knew it; and he sunk back into a chair, as if stricken by the bolt of death.

"The list, and in your hands?" he murmured in a broken voice, as though questioning the fact; and then he cried: "I am lost!"

"No!" said Miguel, "there is still a chance for life. I hold the power within my hands. Your daughter, Manuelita, will tell you all. I will leave you now; you shall have until six to-night to decide. Do not attempt to escape, for your house is watched. For the present I will leave you alone. At six I shall return; then your consent to my proposition or a rebel's doom."

"Oh, father!" cried the weeping girl, "has this man spoken the truth?"

"Yes, my daughter, he has," was the father's answer. "Oh, fool that I was to risk my life in this desperate adventure."

"Can we not fly, father?"

"Alas! no! the house is guarded. I saw two of the soldiers of the garrison near at hand, as I entered."

"But, father," said the maiden, checking her tears, "I can save you. I will become this man's wife, but the thought is agony."

"No, child!" said Torrejon; "never will I consent to such a sacrifice."

At this moment Rita entered the room.

"Señor," she said, "there is a good father at the door who wishes to speak with you."

"Good father," was the usual term used by the peons, when speaking of the monks, who were, indeed, good fathers to the poor, half-civilized Indians.

"Send him in, Rita," said Torrejon.



A monk entered the apartment. His cowl was drawn carefully over his face, concealing it from view. As he entered the room, he drew the cowl back from his head, displaying, not the shaven crown of a monk, but the well-oiled locks of Pablo Mendez, a near neighbor of Torrejon, and, like him, one of the leaders of the revolt. Pablo's face was pale and anxious.

"What means this disguise, Pablo?" questioned Torrejon.

"Our cause is lost!" responded Pablo, in a low, earnest tone. "Guerrero has been defeated in Leon by the Spanish viceroy—his army destroyed, and he himself a fugitive among the mountains."

"That is bad news!" cried Torrejon.

"Worse remains," continued Pablo. "Gallejos has revealed our plot to the commandante Don Miguel, and even now all the haciendas of our leaders are watched by the soldiers of the garrison. To-night they intend to seize us."

"But the news of Guerrero's defeat?"

"Was brought by an Indian who was in the fight, but escaped the slaughter. 'Tis known only to our party."

"How discovered you the treachery of Gallejos?"

"It was discovered by Alvino," replied Pablo. "He saw Gallejos coming from the fort but two hours ago, and saw by his face that he was in fear; so Alvino followed him home, and wisely suspecting that he had betrayed us, demanded the papers in his possession. Gallejos could not produce them, and at last, in terror, confessed that he had given them to the commandante, two days before. In reward for his coward life, he revealed that the commandante proposed to seize us to-night at seven."

"What shall be done?" asked Torrejon, seeking counsel.

"Fly at once."

"But the house is guarded!"

"Assume some disguise—like this, for instance, and pass through the garden."

"Ah!" cried Torrejon. "But my daughter must go with me. Could we but reach the hut of my herdsman on the prairie, there we would find horses, and, once mounted, we could easily reach Lower California, where I have friends and money."



"Let us see if the garden be watched," said Pablo. "All our friends are warned, and will probably escape, as they are short-handed at the fort and can not spare more than one man to guard each house. If there is but a single sentinel in the lane, we can easily overpower him."

"Your plan is good," said Torrejon; "Manuelita, secure your jewels and prepare for flight."

Torrejon and Pablo proceeded to the garden. By means of the small tree that grew near the wall, Pablo ascended, and looked over the coping into the little passage—a passage formed on one side by the garden wall of Torrejon—on the other by a hedge of cactus and other trees and wild plants that grew upon the brink of a small ravine, thus concealing it from sight. Once in the passage, 'twas easy to force a way through the hedge into the ravine, and by following its now dry bed, one could leave the town and gain the open country unperceived.

When first Pablo looked over the wall, for a moment he thought the passage deserted; but a closer inspection revealed to his sight the form of Tio Lasca, seated in the doorway, right beneath him.

To gain the passage, one must go through the doorway—to go through the doorway was to disturb the soldier. Pablo returned to the ground.

"There is a sentinel there," he said to Torrejon.

"Well, how to pass by him?"

"I have a plan," responded Pablo. "This monk's gown of mine is large and full. The soldier's orders are, probably, to stop only the inmates of the house. You first shall take the gown, pass through the door, gain the passage, turn the angle of the wall, then throw the gown back again into the garden. Manuelita, then disguised by it, can pass the sentry and join you beyond the turn. I will accompany her; and if the soldier attempts to detain her, why, force must be used."

"The scheme is good," said Torrejon. "We could not scale the wall without exciting his alarm. I'll see if my daughter is ready."

Torrejon proceeded to the house. Manuelita, assisted by Rita, had changed her dress to a dark riding-habit, which well displayed her exquisite form. Briefly she had told Rita of



the danger she was in, and had charged her to tell Pete of the flight to lower California, that he might tell Arthur; for the poor girl hoped, almost against her own heart, that he still was alive, and if he was alive, that he would follow her.

"Come, my child," said Torrejon, after he had explained the plan of escape. "Let us go at once; no time must be lost."

They proceeded to the garden. Torrejon assumed the monk's gown, and drew the cowl well over his face.

"Good-by, holy father," said Manuelita, purposely in the hearing of the sentry, who was our worthy friend Tio, who pricked up his ears and listened to the voices within the garden. "I shall not forget your good words," she continued.

Tio meditated. A good father was coming: did his orders extend to a good father?—that was the question. Did the sergeant want a monk? "Of course not," he said to himself, answering the question he had raised—and therefore the monk was to go free. Tio was a good Catholic, and had a high respect for monks; for, as he said to himself, having no better company to talk to, "They are such jolly good judges of jolly good wine."

The door opened. Tio knelt down as the monk passed, to receive the usual blessing, but the monk did not stop, but walked swiftly on, taking no notice of the kneeling soldier. Tio was both astonished and disgusted. The good father was a humbug, he thought to himself, as he once again took his position in the doorway. The monk had disappeared round the angle of the wall.

"I will walk with you a little way, holy father," said the voice of Pablo, within the garden wall.

"Another good father!" cried Tio to himself, in astonishment. "By our lady of Santiago! but old Torrejon must be piously inclined. A stranger too? Shall I let both the good father and the stranger go? My orders said nothing about a stranger, and by the tone of his voice he is a young man—perhaps a strong man, perhaps one with not a great amount of respect for the gallant soldiers of his Catholic majesty. If I attempt to arrest him he may resist; that resistance will produce a fight—a fight between me and him. My duties



are to keep the peace ; how can I keep the peace if I provoke a fight—without orders, too ?” He waited for some one to answer this difficult question, but as there was no one to answer it, no one did answer it save himself. “It is clearly my duty not to arrest him.”

The door again opened, and Pablo appeared, accompanied by Manuelita, completely disguised in the monk's gown that Torrejon had thrown over the wall. Manuelita had the cowl drawn over her face as she passed through the doorway. Tio as usual went down on his knees, and if the first monk had passed him without a blessing, the second monk made up for it with so elaborate a one that Tio's respect was won in a trice. The quick woman's wit comprehended the situation.

The monk and Pablo passed from the view of the sentry, and he resumed his position.

“That first big monk was a disgrace to his church !” said he ; “the second—the little one, was worth a dozen like him.”

The worthy Spaniard resumed his watch.

The fugitives had gained the ravine, and were hastening to the herdsman's hut, and the cry went up from their hearts :

“Ho, for the savanna !”

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BLOOD-SPOT ON THE LEAF.

THE sun had sunk to rest in the west ; the tall flowers of the prairie waved gently in the evening breeze ; the dark vail of night was upon the earth.

In the outer room of the home of Lupah, the adobe cottage on the borders of the savanna, on a rude couch of buffalo-skins, lay Arthur, the gold-hunter, and at his head sat the Indian girl, Lupah. A single candle, held in a tin socket in the side of the wall, cast a dim light over the room.

The bruise on Arthur's head, where he had struck against the rocks, was more severe than he had at first imagined.



Lupah had drawn back the hair from the spot, and with a simple lotion had bathed the wound.

The devotion of the simple child of nature thrilled to the heart of the hunter.

"Lupah," he asked, "how did you discover that I was in the cañon, from which you rescued me last night?"

"I will tell," she said, simply. "After I left you at the fandango, I could not go to my home in the prairie, for my heart was sad. So I lingered near the spot where you were. At last I saw you leave the hacienda with the commandante, that bold, bad man; you had sabers in your hands; then I knew that there was danger—danger for you, and my heart was strong. I waited for a moment, and then was about to follow you, when another, the stranger with the scar, came from the house and followed like a wolf on your trail, and I tracked him. I saw the struggle in the cañon, but they were two, I could kill but one, and then I feared the other might kill you, so I waited, and you know the rest."

Arthur looked for a moment upon the earnest face whose eyes were gazing so fondly upon him.

"Lupah," he said, "last night you saved my life. That life now belongs to you."

"No—not to me," she answered, sadly, "but to the Mexican girl, Manuelita."

"No, Lupah, you are wrong! Again I say it belongs to you. Once I saved your life, and once you have saved mine; and now I ask you to make happy the life that you saved. Lupah, I love you!"

"No! no!" she said; "it can not be!" The true spirit of womanhood spoke there—savage or civilized, they always deny the chance of the happiness that they would almost give their souls to gain.

"Can not be?" he cried earnestly. "Lupah, what do you mean? You love me, for your own lips have told me so. I love you. Look in my eyes and see if I do not! Why, then, deny the happiness? Lupah, be the light of my life. Be mine, now and forever!"

What woman, though tricked in silks and laces, and hedged round with all the barriers that an artificial world puts between her and her desires, ever listened to the voice of the



man she truly loved, pleading for love's return, that she did not, if her own will had sway, yield herself to him?

"Weigh nothing 'gainst love,  
Weigh love against the world."

What wonder, then, if the blood flooded the cheeks and brow of the wild-flower of the prairie—that her heart was full of joy and that the joy flowed from her heart to her lips, as, with bosom heaving with passion's throb, and her dark eyes sparkling as they ne'er had sparkled before, she gave up her little hand to the warm pressure of the grasp of him, who was all to her—and her voice trembling from the excess of bliss, said:

"I do love you and I will be yours forever!"

All within the little cabin was joy and love! All without was discord and hate!

Little did the hunter and his love dream, that, even at the very moment they were exchanging their vows of affection, and the red lips were meeting in the warm, lingering kiss, within rifle-shot of their paradise, the assassins were ambushed, awaiting but the signal to dash upon their prey!

All day long, a man had watched the little cottage concealed in the chapparal, near by. He wore the faded uniform of the garrison. And when the shades of night crept over the earth, this single man was joined by some ten others, who came like evil spirits through the darkness.

And now the moon began to rise. Two men came from the chapparal and moved cautiously and slowly toward the cottage. They entered within the stockade-fence. All was still within the house.

The two men were Miguel, the commandante, and the "Red Coyote."

"You are early at your post," said the "Coyote."

"Yes, the conspirators received warning from some unknown source, and all the leaders escaped me. Not a single man did I take."

"And Torrejon and his daughter?" questioned the brigand.

"They too have eluded me; but I have scouts on their trail, and by the Virgin, if I can discover their track, I'll follow them even into the sea!" returned Miguel, fiercely.



"What book is that, that you have in your belt?" asked the "Coyote."

"'Tis the one I promised you. The roster of the garrison."

"Aha! thanks!" and the voice of the brigand was full of joy. "How far back does it extend?"

"To the founding of this post at Serie, twenty years ago," answered Miguel.

"That would make the first date, 1780," said the "Coyote"; "the date I wish to find is fifteen years ago, 1785."

"1785!" the commandante started; "1785!" he repeated to himself. "Why, it was in that year that—" he paused in his thought and cast a glance full of suspicion upon the "Coyote."

"The name of the officer I wish to find," continued the "Wolf," "will be found in the second company of the Battalion of Castile!"

"The second company—my own company and regiment!" murmured Miguel, to himself. "Tell me, Morales," said Miguel, "for I feel strangely curious, why do you wish this book?"

A pause—and then suddenly the "Coyote" spoke.

"I will tell you all." The voice of the "Coyote" was low and solemn. "When you asked me questions last night I lied to you!"

The commandante's eyes shone with a baleful light; there was mischief in his glance. He remembered the questions well.

"You asked me if my mother was of the Apache tribe," continued the "Coyote." "I said, no; there I lied. You asked me if I was born in Leon; I answered you, Durango. There again I lied, for Sonora is my native province. All took me to be a stranger in Serie, when I first came there, five days ago, and yet within this village, twenty-five years ago, was I born. In this village, fifteen years ago, was my father assassinated!" and the tone of the "Coyote" was full of savage menace, as he uttered these words.

"Assassinated!" and the breath of Don Miguel came quick and fast.

"Yes. I will tell you every thing! Fifteen years ago I



dwelt with my parents in a little cottage, hardly five hundred yards from the Cañon of Death. One night—how well I remember it, it seems but yesterday!” and there were tears in the voice of the strong man—“after I had retired to my little bed, I was aroused from my slumbers by the sound of shots in the room. Oh, Heaven! what a sight of horror met my eyes. In one corner of the room lay my mother, dead—shot through the temple, and in the center of the apartment my father bleeding and dying.” The “Coyote’s” voice grew husky and he paused for a moment and buried his face in his hands.

Cold drops of sweat hung bead-like on the brow of Miguel; he knew the story ere it was told: he breathed hard like one in pain. To his fevered imagination, an icy hand seemed to be clutching at him from the grave.

The “Coyote” continued his story.

“When my father saw me his face lit up with a ghastly smile. He beckoned to me, and with a voice weakened by the loss of blood he spoke. ‘My son,’ he said, ‘I am dying: your mother’s beauty has been fatal to us both. An officer of the garrison saw and loved her; I was an obstacle in his way which he determined to remove. He sought our home to-night, with his hired ruffians, to carry her away by force, and to destroy me. Her form received the ball intended for mine; but their leader with his own hand struck this dagger to my heart. I have but a few minutes of life left. Terrified at their own work, they fled, but they will soon return, for they have left traces behind, which they must destroy;’ here his voice failed him; but with a great effort he rallied and spoke again. ‘See!’ he said, pointing to a small book which lay on the floor by his side. ‘This is the roster-book of the garrison dropped by my murderer in his flight. That book he will return to find. See!’ and he opened it. ‘He is an ensign in the second company of the Battalion of Castile. Here is his name, the name of my murderer, and thus I mark it.’ Then with his finger, he let fall a single drop of blood upon that name. ‘My son,’ he said, ‘fly far from here; when thy years warrant, learn the use of arms, become a soldier, and when fifteen have passed return here; by fair means or foul obtain this book; find the name marked



with the blood-spot; then kill the man who bears that name for he has killed thy father.' His head sunk back upon the floor; he never spoke again—he was dead! I obeyed his words—fled from the province—became in time a soldier, then a brigand. Fifteen years have passed and I return to fulfill the legacy of the dead!" The "Coyote" passed his hand across his brow as if to brush away the memory of the terrible scene that he had recalled.

Miguel's brain was busy with active thought. What chance was there for escape? what hope for safety? Suddenly the inspiration came!

Don Miguel started as if in alarm, and bent his ear to listen.

"What is it, commandante?" said the "Coyote."

"It sounded like the tramp of horse. See, at the wall, quick! We may be surprised by Indians; 'tis near the Mexican Moon!"

The Mexican Moon was so termed by the Indians as being the "moon" or month generally selected for their attacks on the frontier settlements.

The "Coyote" hurried to the wall. Hardly was he out of sight ere the commandante opened the roster with a nervous and a hasty hand. He turned over the leaves, until he came to the one marked for the year 1785, and that he tore from the book. He glanced at it. On one of the names was a small spot of a purple hue.

"So," he cried; "there is indeed the blood-spot!" And with a smile of triumph, he folded up the leaf and placed it within the bosom of his embroidered shirt.

"Dark hunter!" and he laughed a low, exulting laugh, "the blow from the grave has failed!"

The "Coyote" returned.

"Well?" questioned Miguel.

"'Twas nothing, commandante; your ears deceived you."

"Perhaps, and yet I am sure that there *was* danger."

"Give me the book!" said the "Coyote," eagerly.

"Here it is;" said Miguel, giving the roster.

"Thanks," he said, as he received the, to him, precious gift. "Now, father, I shall learn the name of thy assassin!" He opened the book and read—"1781—1782—1783—1784



—1786—Caramba! A leaf has been torn from the book! The clue is lost!" he said in a tone of despair.

"Shall we make the attack now?" he asked, presently.

"Yes. You will take three men and burst in the door. If the American escapes you we will finish him with our muskets outside. The moonlight is strong, and we can not miss him."

"So be it!" said the brigand.

They returned to their men. The "Coyote" selected three stout fellows to accompany him. Miguel, with three more, was to act as a reserve. The remainder were posted so as to surround the cottage, should Arthur escape from the assailing party and endeavor to gain the chapparal.

The "Coyote," with his three men, advanced and tried the door softly. 'Twas firmly barred inside—no chance of a surprise. The "Coyote" thought for a moment. The door could not be forced with their weapons. The American was armed, and might pick them off one by one, while they were breaking down the barrier. Then he remembered that he had noticed a small fallen tree on the outside of the fence. 'Twas a sturdy little oak, and the woodman who had felled it had trimmed off the branches neatly. By using it as a battering-ram, they could force the door in by a single blow.

Quietly, and without the slightest noise, they brought it into position. Six sturdy pair of arms bore it to the door, for two of Miguel's party reinforced the "Coyote."

"Now!" said the "Coyote."

Bang 'gainst the door went the young oak; smash went the tough timber, splintered by the shock—the bar had snapped in twain.

A moment paused the assaulting party to drop the tree, resume their arms, and dash in at the opening. That moment cost two lives; for, with catlike quickness, at the first signal of the attack, Arthur and Lupah seized their rifles, and, as the attacking party poured in at the doorway, the sharp crack of the rifles followed, fired at point-blank range. A brawny Spaniard, the first in the advance, received Arthur's bullet in the temple, and with a convulsive groan, fell forward on his face, stone-dead. Lupah's bullet struck the second man in



the shoulder, and he fell backward, blocking up the doorway. The "Coyote," who was following close behind, stumbled over him; the crack of a pistol-shot rung on the night, fired from the yard by one of the attacking party. The stumble saved the life of the "Coyote." The bullet fired from behind just grazed the top of his right ear. Had he not stumbled, it would have crashed through his brain. Whoever fired the shot aimed badly, or aimed too true, for it went wide of the American, and came within an inch of the "Coyote."

"Curse the fool!" muttered the "Coyote," as he felt the sting of the bullet; "had I not stumbled my race had been run!—Fire!" shouted he.

A discharge followed. Strange to say, the hunter escaped unhurt; but Lupah lay upon the floor, apparently dead. With a cry of defiance Arthur dropped his rifle, drew his hunting-knife, and dashed upon the foemen in the doorway. With his left hand he struck the "Coyote" a powerful blow between the eyes, which sent him reeling sideways into the room; then two quick thrusts with the knife, and for each thrust dropped a helpless man. The doorway was clear, the other Spaniard flying for his life. With a quick bound Arthur secured his rifle and dashed through the door, the "Coyote" following in pursuit.

A volley from Miguel and his men greeted the appearance of the American, but he seemed to bear a charmed life, for not a bullet touched him. Clubbing his rifle, he fought a passage to an opening in the stockade, and then with a bound he was lost to sight in the chapparal. Two more shots were fired at his retreating figure by the soldiers posted on the outskirts of the chapparal, but in vain; the American had escaped, and apparently unhurt.

Miguel counted up the results of the night's work. Three of his best men killed outright; one suffering from a severe wound from the keen-edged knife of the hunter; and two more with broken heads caused by contact with the iron-shod butt of the hunter's rifle. True, the commandante remained in possession of the field of battle, but 'twas a barren victory. But the Indian girl, Lupah, was in his hands. She had been stunned by a musket-ball that had just grazed her scalp, without inflicting any injury save a slight scratch.



By Miguel's direction she was carried into the inner room and laid upon a couch of skins.

As the commandante knelt to look at the Indian girl, a pistol dropped from his girdle. The "Coyote" picked it up and handed it to him. It was a little, delicate weapon, almost a toy in looks. The "Coyote" noticed that the muzzle was blackened by powder, as though it had been recently discharged, and yet he remembered that he had not seen the commandante fire it in the fight.

The "Coyote" took a flint and a steel from his pocket and lit a candle that he found hanging on the wall. With this he proceeded to examine the outer room, the scene of the late fight, which had taken place by the light of the moonbeams that strayed in at the open door. He went first to the doorway, and assumed the same position, as near as he could guess, as he held when he stumbled over the dead man and received the shot, which came so near. Then, calculating the distance and the height, he went straight to the opposite wall, and began to search for the resting-place of the bullet that so nearly struck him.

In the wall, and near the place his judgment pointed to, were two holes. With his knife he dug out the bullets. One was large, evidently from a musket—the other was small, a pistol-bullet. The "Coyote" was fully convinced that Don Miguel had fired the shot that came so near being fatal to him.

"Will you return to the village?" said the "Coyote," joining Miguel in the inner room.

"No, we will wait here until morning," he replied. "Place a guard beyond, in the chapparal; the American may return, thinking we are gone, and thus we may secure him."

The guard was placed and all again was still.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## ONE HUNDRED OUNCES FOR A LIFE.

MORNING came at last. The trap of the commandante had been set in vain, as the American had not returned.

Miguel, who had passed a restless night, stretched upon a buffalo-skin in the outer room, sought the inner one, to visit his prisoner.

Miguel had long fancied the Indian girl, and often, in the village, had attempted to engage her in conversation, but always without success. For some unknown reason she feared and avoided him; why, he knew not.

Lupah was in a deep sleep. The commandante stood by her side and gazed upon her.

"How beautiful she is!" he murmured, "and how like her mother as she was fifteen years ago! I loved the mother then—faith, I almost love the daughter now." Then his brow clouded as he thought of the past.

The Indian girl moved restlessly in her slumbers.

"The first love was a fatal one," his thoughts ran. "It cost two lives and nearly sacrificed my own. I thought that event was buried, never again to rise; but lo! a hand even from the grave is raised to strike me. But, that stroke I have parried. What good genius is watching over this man, that saved him from my bullet last night? Had he not stumbled at the very moment that I discharged my pistol, no power could have saved him. I am safe; the proof is in my possession; no other exists. What then have I to fear? The "Coyote" may be a bloodhound, but if he loses the trail he is nothing but a cur."

A grim smile of satisfaction crept over his face. He drew from his bosom the page he had torn from the roster, looked again upon the name, again upon the blood-spot. A noise startled him—he thrust the page into his belt, thinking some one was coming; but 'twas merely a soldier moving about in the other room.



Lupah opened her eyes and gazed around her with a look of wonder.

"The commandante! you here?" she cried. "Where am I?" And she brushed back the long hair from her temples, as though it fettered her recollection.

"You are in safety, fair one. Do not fear!" And the commandante spoke in his low, soft tones.

"Fear! No, I do not fear!" replied the girl, still bewildered; "but it seems as if I was in a dream, and— Ah! I remember now!" she cried, as the events of the past night flashed across her brain. "The soldiers—the stranger with the scar and Arthur—where is he?"

"You will never see him more!" returned the commandante, coldly.

"You have killed him! Oh! I see the snake in your eye!" cried Lupah, in a tearful voice. "Why did you spare me? Why did you not kill me too?"

"Because I did not wish you to die!" replied the commandante, in his softest tones. "Because, fair flower of the prairie, I love you!"

"You love me?" asked the girl, in wonder.

"Yes!"

"You can not love!" answered Lupah, in a tone of disdain.

"You think so? You are wrong; but granting it to be the truth, can not you teach me?"

"I teach you?" questioned Lupah. "No, señor commandante—I *hate*, nay more, I fear you!"

"Fear me, Lupah?" and the cloud appeared again on the brow of Don Miguel. "Fear me?" he repeated, "and why?"

"I can not tell," answered the girl, as if speaking in a dream. "I seem to remember something that happened long, long ago. And yet I can hardly remember it. I can see my mother's face—'tis in tears. I can hear your voice, 'tis in anger; then all is dark, and I can remember nothing more. It may be a dream, yet it seems so like reality."

A strange light shone in the eyes of the commandante, and the thought flashed across his mind, "She remembers the death of her mother;" and he muttered to himself, "It seems



like a dream, she tells me! Well, it shall be a dream to her."

The Indian girl had sunk back on the couch of skins. Miguel advanced nearer to her.

"Lupah," he said, "forget this memory of a dream. Lupah, I am your friend, although you have avoided me. Lupah," and his voice assumed the low, passionate tone he knew so well how to use, "you are beautiful—not the calm, quiet beauty of civilization, but the wild, the savage beauty of the savanna. Lupah, you say I can not love, and yet I love you, and I tell you so!"

The lips of the Indian girl curled in disdain as she half rose to her feet and looked the commandante full in the eye.

"As I told you before," she said, "you *can not* love; your heart is too bad and hard."

"Lupah!" he cried in hot passion, while his voice trembled with emotion—for this strange man, so cool at times, possessed in his nature the fiery heat of the volcano—you wrong me, I swear to you. I love you with a strange, intense passion."

"Yes," she answered, drawing herself up proudly, and looking at him with a glance full of scorn; "you love me as the serpent loves the poor bird, that, fascinated by his lurid eye, forsakes her bough of safety, folds her little wings, and falls into his uplifted jaws. You are the serpent, but I am not the bird. No, señor commandante, I am not for you; I love another, and that love shall save me. Away, señor! The bird is high in the bough, beyond the reach of the creeping serpent!"

These scornful words only added fuel to feed the fire of passion that raged in the veins of the commandante. Opposition pleased him; he despised a victory that was easily won.

"Lupah, you speak of a love that shall protect you;" and a sneer appeared upon his face. "You forget the events of last night. If the love you speak of appertains to the American, you had best cast it away, for you will never see him more."

"He is not dead?" and the tone of pitiful entreaty in the



voice of the poor girl would have touched any heart less hard than that one of iron within his breast.

"He is dead!" he said, coldly.

"Oh, no! it can not be!" and with a moan of anguish, Lupah sunk again upon the little couch.

"It is true. He fell by the bullets of my soldiers."

"Oh! my heart will break!" sobbed the girl. "I shall die!"

Miguel knelt by her side and endeavored to clasp her hand. His touch worked a wondrous transformation. In a moment the tears dried upon Lupah's cheek; her eyes flashed fire, and the blood flushed to her face. She sprung to her feet and stood before him like one of the Pagan goddesses of old, inspired by the flame from heaven.

"I will live!" she cried—"live for vengeance!"

For a moment the commandante was dumb with astonishment; then he spoke:

"Lupah, what do you mean?"

"I will tell you," she replied, excitedly. "I am the child of two nations. A moment since, I was the Spanish girl, weeping for her lover; but now the red Indian blood is burning in my veins. I am the daughter of the wild Apache race—the 'Flower of the Prairie.' You have slain my husband; the law of the prairie is blood for blood, life for life. I give you ten days to live; at the end of that time, if you are in Sonora, I swear by all the Apache blood within my veins, that the bullet from my rifle shall pierce your heart."

And she stood before him with her little form drawn up to its full height, and every vein and muscle in her body swelling with excitement. A moment she stood, a glorious picture, and then the tension on her overstrung nerves giving way, she fell back fainting upon the rude couch.

Miguel determined to leave her to herself for awhile, trusting that reflection would calm down her anger. He passed through the outer room and stood in the doorway leading to the yard.

A horseman rode into the inclosure.

"Ah, Gomez, is it you?" questioned Miguel, advancing. "What news?"



"This packet from the viceroy in Leon," said the lieutenant.

The commandante tore the packet open. It contained three papers: the first a letter from the viceroy, announcing the total defeat of the rebels; the second, Miguel's commission as Governor of Sonora; the third, the pardon of the "Red Coyote."

"By whom was this brought?" said Miguel.

"A special courier in answer to your messenger," replied Gomez. "He has ridden hard. The news must be important."

"It is," said Miguel. "Guerrero has been defeated by the viceroy; his army is wholly dispersed, and it is reported that Guerrero himself was killed in the rout. In reward for my services in suppressing the revolt here, I have received the commission of Governor of Sonora."

"I congratulate your excellency," responded the lieutenant, giving him the new title; "but who is to succeed you as commandante here?"

"Of that I am about to speak," said Miguel. "Gomez, the brigand, called the 'Red Coyote,' is not only alive, but in our very village. You know the stranger who bears a scar upon his left cheek—the Señor Riva Morales? *He* is the 'Red Coyote!'"

"Can it be?" and Gomez started in astonishment. "Did not the Government offer a reward for this ladrone's head?" he asked.

"Yes, and that reward—a hundred golden ounces—is still offered. I shall bestow upon the man who kills this brigand the commission of commandante of the fort!"

"I will undertake the task," responded Gomez.

"Good!" replied Miguel. "Return to the fort; select four of the best marksmen among our soldiers; post them on the road leading from here into the village. A clump of cactus, just outside the village, will do excellently for an ambuscade. I will send him with a message into the fort. As he passes you, riddle him with bullets." The voice of Miguel was low and intense with hate. "Do not attempt to capture him. Remember, it is not the robber that we want, but his dead body."



"I shall remember," said the lieutenant, as he sprung into the saddle.

The sound of his horse's hoofs soon died away in the distance.

The sound of a horse rapidly approaching now attracted the Don's attention. At first he thought it was Gomez returning; but as the horse galloped into the yard, he saw that it was one of his scouts, named Juan, that he had dispatched in search of Torrejon.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### LUPAH'S NEW FRIEND.

MIGUEL advanced eagerly to meet the scout.

"Well, Juan," he cried, "what news? Have you discovered the trail?"

"Yes, commandante," replied the scout; "not only the trail but Torrejon himself. He was at his herdsman's hut on the prairie—he, his daughter, and Don Pablo Mendez. They rested at the herdsman's hut last night, being unable to procure horses until this morning, and then took the road for lower California."

"The road to lower California? Let me see—the first resting-place is called the Apache spring, is it not?"

"Yes, señor," replied the scout. "They would reach there by twelve, and then rest their horses for an hour."

"Ride to the garrison at once; tell the ensign to pick five of my best men and six of my best horses—you will make one of the five men. Let them be fully armed with both musket and saber. Have them prepare at once and form in the square and there await my coming."

Juan, bowing, put spurs to his horse and dashed away.

The face of the commandante wore a triumphant look. He closed his hand as though he held his foes in his gripe, and by the action crushed them.

Miguel entered the house. The "Coyote" was in the inner room; the soldiers occupied the outer.



Calling Diaz to him, Miguel said: "Remain here; keep the Indian girl a prisoner until I return. If she attempts to escape, fasten her in the inner room and guard the door and window." He then passed on to the inner room. The "Coyote" was gazing upon the still sleeping girl's features. The entrance of Miguel roused him from his abstraction.

"Commandante," said the "Coyote," rising, "you promised me a certain paper." His act was sudden, as if to conceal some emotion.

"True; your pardon," said Miguel, as he drew it from his belt where he had placed it, and as he did so, another—a smaller one—came with it and dropped, unnoticed by either, to the floor.

"Thanks," said the "Coyote," his face lighting up. "Now once again, I do not fear the daylight; now once again can I search for the murderer of my father!"

The commandante started.

"This man is a perfect bloodhound," he thought; "it is time he should die. Morales," he said, aloud, "will you take this packet to the garrison for me? I am about to pursue Torrejon and his daughter, and do not wish to lose time. They are on the road to lower California; I expect to overtake them at the Apache Spring, where they will halt. Do not fail to deliver that packet safely, as it contains my commission as Governor of Sonora."

"I will not fail. When do you start?"

"At once," replied Miguel. "The soldiers will remain here to guard the girl. Farewell." And with a smile upon his lips, the commandante left the house, and soon was lost to view.

The "Coyote" placed the pardon in his belt and resumed his seat by the sleeping girl.

"How beautiful she is!" he exclaimed; "and how like to some one that I have seen before! Who can it be?"

Lupah, with a sudden start, awoke from her deep sleep.

"Do not fear me," said the "Coyote." "I am a friend."

"I do not fear," replied the poor child, bowed down by her heavy weight of grief. "I was thinking of the American."

"Do you love him so much?" asked the "Wolf."



"I did love him, and now that he is lost to me, naught remains but death."

The "Coyote" did not quite understand her speech. He did not know the commandante had falsely told her that Arthur was dead.

"Do not speak so," he said, softening down his harsh voice until it was as gentle as a woman's, "for life is before you, bright and beautiful. You can love again."

"No," replied Lupah, sadly, "never! my heart is buried in Arthur's grave."

"Do not say so!" cried the "Coyote," impelled by an impulse that he could neither resist nor understand. "Do not say that you can never love again, for *I* love you!"

Lupah shrunk from him, as he advanced, as if to take her in his arms.

"No! no!" she cried, "do not touch me!"

"Maiden, do not fear," he said, in a gentle voice. "I mean you no harm. I love you as a saint. Let me but hold you in my arms for a single moment, and then you are free to depart, unhurt, unharmed."

"Again, I say, I do not fear you," said Lupah, "but I implore you, do not touch me!"

"Lupah, I will not harm you; all I ask is, let me but hold you in my arms for a single moment, and then you are free." The "Coyote" could not resist the impulse which thrilled him to the heart.

"Oh, spare me!" implored the helpless girl. "Oh, father above, look down and pity thy child!"

"Thy father?" said the "Coyote." "What was his name?"

"Velasco, the hunter to the Mission."

The "Coyote" staggered back, as if stricken by a bolt from Heaven.

"Velasco, the hunter, thy father? Gracious Heaven—he was also mine!" he cried. "My sister, do you fear me now?"

In a moment they were locked in a close embrace.

"My brother!" murmured Lupah.

"Yes, thy brother!" said the "Coyote," fondly gazing upon her. "You are very like your mother. I was blind not to have guessed the truth before. My poor girl! Henceforth,



you shall not want a brother's care. After our father's death I looked through the cottage window and saw the assassins returning with firebrands to complete their work. I determined to save you, then a child. I took you in my arms, leaped through the window and sought shelter in the chapparal. I saw the cottage fired, and then the red flames shot forth. The assassins, having completed their task, fled, and the people of the village, aroused from their slumbers, gathered around the blazing house. I constructed a bed of leaves and placed you on it, then hovered near until the villagers found you. I determined to let all the world think that I had perished in the flames, as I knew my life would not be safe if the assassins knew that I lived."

"Oh, brother!" said Lupah, "I have been so happy until now."

"Cheer up, dear one," returned the "Coyote"; "brighter days may be in store for you. See, I have here my pardon from the Government for my past deeds, so I can once more face my fellow-men with upright head. Keep it for me. I will see the sergeant in command, and ascertain whether he has any orders to detain you or not, for I wish to set out for the capital at once; but first to find your lover."

"Is he not dead?" cried Lupah.

"No, he escaped last night, unhurt."

Lupah's joy can not be expressed by words. Happiness then still existed in the world, and for her.

"I will return in a moment, sister," said the "Coyote," and he passed into the other room.

The "Coyote's" pardon had dropped from Lupah's hand in the moment of her joy. She stooped to pick it up. As she did so, her eyes fell upon the page of the roster that Miguel had dropped upon the floor.

"This must have dropped from my brother's pardon," she said to herself. She opened it. "It is a list of names. I will place it inside the other paper, so that it will not be lost;" and so she put the missing leaf within the pardon of the "Red Coyote." Surely, the dark angel himself was leagued against the commandante, for thus, by this series of accidents, was the lost clue placed in the hands of the only man who would hunt down the prey.



## CHAPTER XV.

## A SATANIC VISITATION.

THE "Coyote" sought the sergeant.

"What orders did the commandante leave respecting the Indian girl?" he asked.

"To keep her prisoner until Don Miguel returns, señor," was the answer.

"You must be careful, or she may escape. Have you a guard at the window?"

"Yes, señor."

"That is well," replied the "Coyote," and walked into the yard. Carelessly he sauntered around the house. Seated beneath the window was a sentinel, who was no other than our red-headed friend, Tio Lasca. As usual, he was half asleep.

The quick eye of the "Coyote" noted the surroundings. Once through the window, the cottage hid them from the view of the soldiers who were scattered half asleep about the doorway. The wall was easy to climb, and on the outside of it and in the chapparal, they could bid defiance to pursuit.

The "Coyote" felt certain the commandante's orders to detain Lupah meant mischief. He resolved that she should escape, and apparently without assistance, as he had his reasons for not wishing to make a foe of the commandante.

He quickly formed his plan. Having visited all the men, he entered the house again, and passed into the inner room. Briefly he explained his wishes to Lupah. He then, with his hunting-knife, cut some long strips of skin from one of the hides, and then a square piece from it to serve as a gag.

Tio Lasca was the sentinel posted beneath the open window, and, as usual, Tio was asleep. The dreams of Tio were rudely broken, for, with the spring of a tiger, the "Coyote" dropped from the little window upon the sentinel, and, with a single noiseless but powerful blow, stretched him senseless



upon the earth. Then, with the ropes of hide, the "Coyote" bound his hands and feet together, tied the gag in his mouth, and, with a larger piece of the skin, bandaged his eyes. When Tio recovered his senses he was in darkness.

But he could feel, though, and the feeling was not pleasant; what he felt was the sharp point of a knife at his throat, and a hoarse voice whispered in his ear:

"Attempt to struggle or to make a noise and you are a dead man!"

Tio would have prayed, but his memory was bad, and praying he had generally left to the "good fathers," so he swore to himself instead. Meanwhile he kept still as a mouse, hardly daring to breathe.

Lupah came lightly through the window, passed the yard, scaled the wall—an easy task, as the rough projections served as resting-places for her feet—gained the chapparal, and was free.

The "Coyote," after watching Lupah over the wall, took the helpless soldier in his arms as if he had been an infant, and carried him through the window, then laid him on the couch and covered him over completely with the skins. He then passed through the outer room into the yard.

"I am going to the village," he said. "The Indian girl is sleeping. I would not disturb her, but keep good watch," and then he took the road toward the village.

"Yes, señor," said the sergeant.

An hour passed on, an hour which seemed an eternity to Tio, bound, helpless and almost suffocating, on the little couch beneath the weight of the skins.

One of the soldiers, happening to go round the house, discovered the absence of the sentry. The sergeant ordered an instant search, but no clue could be discovered.

"The d—l himself must have taken him!" quoth the sergeant, after giving up the search as useless.

"The Virgin forbid!" said one of the most pious soldiers, crossing himself and looking around in dismay.

"Where then can he have gone?" said the sergeant, vainly seeking a solution of the riddle. "Let us examine the inner room."

They entered the room cautiously, the bravest among them



feeling a slight nervous dread at the unaccountable disappearance of their comrade.

The sergeant approached the couch and turned aside the skin, but on perceiving a man's head, he started back in astonishment.

"Holy Mother!" he cried, "the girl is a man!"

The soldiers, superstitious to a degree almost beyond belief, at this extraordinary intelligence made a hasty movement toward the door.

Although Tio could not see, still he could hear, and he comprehended from these exclamations that he had nothing longer to fear. With a powerful effort, he rolled from the couch to the floor. The soldiers, terrified at this sudden movement, and thinking that the Evil One himself had come in person to claim them, made a rush for the doorway, in their haste tumbling headlong over one another. The sergeant, not being able to get through the doorway, blocked up as it was by the frightened crowd, was compelled to look at the strange object that had rolled from the bed.

The shock of falling had started the gag from Tio's mouth, and he bawled for help, lustily.

The sound of his voice recalled the frightened soldiers. They crowded around and unbound him.

Tio's account of how he came in such a situation was not particularly clear. In fact, he knew but little about it, and felt strongly inclined to look upon the whole encounter as a hand-to-hand battle with the Evil One himself.

One thing alone was certain: whether Tio's foes were mortal or spirits from the other world, the Indian girl had disappeared. Search was immediately made, but in vain. Tio still stuck to his belief that she had been spirited off by Satan in person, and related strange old legends to prove that the Indians were favored children of His Satanic Majesty.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE THREE AVENGERS.

WE will now return to Pete, whom we have not seen for some time. After leaving Rita, Pete passed through the village and gained the open country. Once there, he made a complete circuit of the town of Serie, his keen eye watching, but in vain, for traces of Arthur's presence. Thus passed the afternoon. Pete returned to the little inn for supper, and mingled with the people that filled the little square. His search produced no satisfactory results. No one had seen the missing American.

When the bell of the little chapel tolled nine, Pete was prompt at the garden gate, to keep his appointment with Rita. She, equally as prompt, was in waiting.

After Pete's story of the failure of his search, Rita told of her mistress and the old señor.

"Ginger!" exclaimed Pete, with a low whistle of astonishment. "What's to become of you?"

"Why," said Rita, half sorrowfully, "I must follow them."

"Must you?" questioned our honest friend. "Then, what's to become of me?"

"Why, señor—" said Rita, hesitating and blushing at the idea, "can you not come with me?"

"Wal," answered Pete, "I s'pose I kin, sunflower; but I hate to give up Art just yet, 'cos I knows he's somewhar 'bove the ground."

"I will wait until you are ready, señor," rejoined the Mexican girl, demurely.

"Will yer?" said Pete, his face brightening up, and then he took one of her delicate brown hands in his large paw. "Sunflower, you're an angel in petticoats, you are. I don't know what on earth I've done that I should deserve such a gal as you. You're a hull team, and no mistake!"

Rita blushed, and smiled through her blushes, pleased beyond measure at her lover's compliments.



"Oh, señor," she said, "you make me blush!"

"Jes' so!" said Pete, in his quiet way; "that's natur'. Keep on blushing; don't stop it. Do you know, sunflower, when I'm round you, I don't think of any thing but you? Why, I almost forget Arthur, and that's right down tough, I tell you."

"Oh! I pity you so much," said Rita, in her gentle, womanly way, as she placed her little round face close to that of her lover. Pete could not withstand the temptation, and passing his arm quietly around her waist, he drew her close to his broad, manly breast, and kissed the red, pouting lips.

"Are you happy?" The cunning glance from the wondrous brown eyes spoke her own happiness.

"Happy! Guess I am! I feel as if I was a-sittin' on top of a big mountain and owned all I see'd!"

"It is getting late—I must go in," said Rita.

"Jes' so!" replied Pete. "Good-night, sunflower. I shall be on the prairie, on the trail, all day to-morrow; so I'll be here ag'in to-morrow night. Good-by!" A warm clasp of the hand, a still warmer pressure of the lips, and Pete left his Mexican bride—that was to be.

It was not yet late, and Pete resolved to take his rifle and enjoy a stroll beyond the limits of the town. The moon was bright and full in the heavens, and the night-air was cool and delightful after the heat of the day.

Pete walked on for a couple of miles, and finally came to where the chapparal hedged in the road.

Suddenly on the still night-air rung the sharp, whip-like crack of two rifles, one after the other. Pete paused to listen; then followed a single report, like that of a pistol, and then a regular volley from heavy muskets, as Pete's practiced ear quick decided.

Evidently there was a struggle going on, and that struggle not far distant. Pete determined to be "counted in," and ran noiselessly in the direction of the shot. He had proceeded hardly a dozen steps, when some more musket-shots rung on the air, and these seemed nearer, for the first were dull and muffled as though fired within the wall of a house.

A noise of some one approaching stopped Pete's advance. Cocking his rifle he dropped on his face in the bushes. Right



beyond our hunter was a little glade, open and free from shrubs, on which the moon shone brightly. A man came into the open space. In his hand he bore a rifle. He turned for a moment as if to listen for sounds of a pursuit.

That man was Arthur Kenton, the gold-hunter.

Judge of Pete's delight when he looked upon the face he had feared he never again should see. He rose to his feet. Arthur turned at the sound and clubbed his rifle as if expecting another foe; but, as Pete stepped from the shadow of the bushes, he dropped the weapon with a cry of delight.

"Pete!" he exclaimed.

"Jes' so, hoss!" was Pete's joyous answer.

"By heaven, Pete, I never was so glad to see a friend before!" said Arthur, as he grasped Pete's hand and wrung it warmly.

"Jes' so! Same to you! Whar have you kept yourself?"

"Hush!" continued Arthur. "Let us listen and see if they are following me."

For a few moments they listened, and Arthur improved the opportunity to reload his rifle. But, as we have seen, after the slight display of Arthur's prowess the Spaniards did not dare to follow him into the fortress of the chapparal.

"Nary follow!" said Pete, after some moments of silent watching.

"You are right; they do not dare;" and a scornful smile was on Arthur's face. "And now, Pete," he continued, "I'll tell you every thing that has occurred since we parted at the fandango." Then Arthur briefly detailed the fight in the Cañon of Death—the treacherous manner in which he had been dealt with, and his wonderful escape from death through the agency of the Indian girl. Then he detailed the attack on the cottage, the contest therein, and his escape.

"And the Indian girl?" questioned Pete.

"She is there, but whether the bullet that struck her down inflicted a mortal wound or not, I do not know," said Arthur. "Now that you have reinforced me, let us return, lay in ambush, and watch their movements."

"Jes' so!" said Pete. "I shouldn't mind wipin' out one or two, or a half a dozen, of these 'greasers' myself."

The two friends made their way cautiously and quietly



through the chapparal. They selected a spot from which they could view the cottage. Luckily they did not stumble upon the soldiers who were already ambushed waiting Arthur's return. And our two friends had no suspicions that others were concealed besides themselves, until the morning came and the soldiers left their posts and joined their comrades inside the cottage.

They watched the approach of Gomez and also his departure.

Then the arrival of the scout, and the setting forth of the commandante; still no sign of Lupah.

"A good omen," said Arthur to Pete. "Had she been killed they would not remain."

"Hadn't I better follow that crutter?" asked Pete, as the commandante passed them.

"Yes, but do not harm him; leave him to me," replied Arthur.

And you, too, American! Leave him to one whose wrongs date further back than thine!

Pete dogged the commandante.

Near the town Miguel met Gomez, who was just ambushing his men. Pete crept near enough, concealed by the bushes, to overhear the design to kill the "Coyote."

"'Tarnal death!" he said to himself. "I thought dog wouldn't eat dog, but this cuss is snake all over!"

As Pete had heard the commandante detail his plan to follow the fugitives, he did not think it worth while to follow him further, but returned at once to Arthur and related the events of his scout. And they once more turned their attention to the cottage.

From their position they commanded a view of the front of the little dwelling and the opening in the stockade, so that Lupah's escape was concealed from them by the house.

When the "Coyote" left the cottage his peculiar manner excited the attention of our watchers.

"What's he up to?" asked Pete.

"He is evidently afraid of being watched from the cottage;" and then, as a sudden inspiration came to him, (he scarcely knew why,) he said, "Let us follow him!"

Arthur and Pete, with caution, followed the "Wolf," until,



in the chapparal, he joined Lupah, who was there waiting for him.

Arthur was puzzled, but concluded that the Indian girl was not going of her own free will; so, without a moment's hesitation, he cocked his rifle, and, followed by Pete, stood in the way before them.

Lupah, the moment she beheld him, with a cry of joy rushed to his arms, while Pete drew a bead with his rifle on the head of the "Coyote." The "Wolf," unmindful of Pete's threatening attitude, coldly folded his arms and looked upon the lovers.

"Shall I play him, Art?" asked Pete, undecided, and impressed with the coolness of the brigand.

"No! no!" cried Lupah. "It is my brother, señor."

"*Ginger!*" said Pete to himself. "A tan-colored family!"

"Your brother?" asked Arthur.

"Yes, but we did not know it until an hour ago. He is not your foe but your friend now!" said the girl, leading Arthur to the "Coyote," and placing their hands together. Arthur accepted the proffered hand.

"Let the past be past!" said the "Coyote," deeply moved. "Henceforth my life is yours!"

"Human natur' couldn't be fairer!" observed Pete.

"And now perhaps I can do you a service. You think the commandante is your friend?" said Arthur.

"Yes; he should be my friend."

"You are wrong; he is your foe. Even now a squad of his men are ambushed on the road near the village, ready to assassinate you as you pass," said Arthur.

"The traitor!" cried the "Coyote," between his teeth. "He procured me my pardon from the viceroy, yet now he attempts my life! Give me the pardon, Lupah."

Lupah gave him the packet.

"Thus do I tear it to pieces!" he cried; "thus do I give it to the winds, which are truer than his false heart!" And as he tore the packet open, the folded leaf dropped to the ground at his feet. He picked it up, opened it, and then started with surprise.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed, "'tis the missing page of the roster," and the big veins on his forehead swelled out like



knotted cords. "Here is the blood-spot, and the name is—" and he ended the broken sentence with a fierce laugh of joy.

To the rest of the little group his words were a riddle.

"American!" he cried, "the commandante has wronged you; would you have revenge?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Arthur. "I would like to run him through in a second combat!"

And Pete emphatically added:

"*You bet!*"

"Let us follow him then to the savanna. I know the direction in which he rides. His party is but six strong, for which we are more than a match. I know where we can procure swift horses, and they needs must be swift, for we ride for life!" There was a tone of terrible joy in the voice of the "Coyote" that thrilled upon his hearers. He seemed almost wild with excitement.

"And Lupah?" asked Arthur.

"She can remain in the village until we return. We shall not be long!"

The "Coyote" led the way. By a *détour* they escaped the ambushade. At the cottage of a herdsman, on the outskirts of the town, who was evidently well known to the "Wolf," they obtained horses, and at the cottage they left Lupah until they should return.

The "Coyote" was in a fever of excitement until they were in the saddle.

"Spur, gentlemen, spur!" he cried. "We ride for a human life this day!"



## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE COMMANDANTE APPEALS TO THE HIGHEST JUDGE.

THE Apache Spring! Rare sight on the prairie. A clear, pure spring bubbled forth its bright waters, shining diamond-like in the sunlight.

The prairie was what was termed by the Mexicans, a rolling one, broken here and there by small growths of under-wood.

Three persons reclined on the grass near the spring, enjoying a frugal repast, while their horses were picketed near at hand.

The three were our fugitives—Don Torrejon, his daughter Manuelita, and Señor Pablo.

"Do you not think there is danger in stopping, father? May we not be pursued?" asked Manuelita.

"But little danger, my child. They can not tell which way we have gone; besides, are we not armed?" and the speaker waved his hand carelessly to where their guns lay by the side of the horses, at the least forty yards distant. The Mexicans knew little of prairie-craft, to coin a word, or they would never have left their weapons and their horses at such a distance from them, and in such a broken country, too, where a foe could approach within thirty feet, by taking advantage of the cover afforded by the undergrowth, almost without notice. But Torrejon and Pablo were not Indian fighters.

Suddenly a shout rung on the air; then a rush of horsemen who had skillfully approached unnoticed, and the weapons and horses of the fugitives were in the hands of Miguel and his men! The commandante was a good soldier and planned the surprise well.

Without weapons, Torrejon and Pablo of course were helpless, and they were quickly bound by the rude hands of the soldiers.

"Señor Torrejon," said Miguel, in a cool, mocking way, "you are a traitor to your country. Your life is forfeited to the



laws that you have broken. Have you any thing to say in defense of your crime ?”

“ I am a Mexican, not a Spaniard !” answered the old man, with dignity. “ I strove to free my country from the iron rule of Spain, and to relieve it from the presence of petty tyrants, like yourself, señor commandante. I have failed ! that is my crime. I am in your hands and know my fate—death.” The old man’s blood was up ; he did not expect nor desire mercy.

“ You speak rashly !” said Miguel, with a frown. “ You should curb your tongue, or it may cost you your head. Manuelita,” and his voice changed to a lower and a softer key, “ your father’s life is in my hands. You can save him if you will ; you know the conditions.”

“ Manuelita—daughter !” cried the old man, “ do not answer the tempter. Should you become his wife I would curse you forever !”

“ Be silent !” cried Miguel, hotly. “ Are you weary of life that you would cast it away for the sake of a few idle words ? Manuelita, what is your answer ?”

“ Better death than you !” came quietly from the cold and firm-set lips of the beautiful Mexican.

“ Commandante, let me advise you to proceed and shoot us as soon as possible, as you must clearly perceive that all hold you in most profound contempt !” said Pablo, with biting sarcasm. Manuelita rewarded him with a grateful look. Miguel bit his lip in anger.

“ Your advice is good, señor,” he said, “ and whatever my faults may be, I always accept good advice. Take the girl away, some of you.”

Two of the soldiers dismounted, and, despite Manuelita’s resistance, tore her from the arms of her father.

Miguel took the head of his men.

“ Make ready !” he cried.

The three soldiers raised their muskets—another moment and Miguel opened his lips to give the death-signal, when—

“ Yah, yoo ! yoo ! youph !” resounded the Indian yell over the prairie, as three mounted men dashed up to the spring, right beside the prisoners. Two of them jumped from their horses, and wheeling the animals round sideways, leveled their



long rifles over their backs, the bodies of the animals forming an almost complete protection to themselves. The two men on the ground were Arthur and Pete; the third on the horse, with the long, heavy pistol ready cocked in his hand, was the "Red Coyote."

Miguel was caught at a disadvantage; two of his party were far from their weapons, with Manuelita; the other three had lowered their pieces, and were looking uneasily at the shining barrels of the long rifles aimed at them. Miguel saw that but little would induce them to break and fly for their lives. He felt that the situation was desperate.

"Miguel Castello!" said the cold, stern voice of the "Coyote," "your last hour has come!"

"What do you mean, Riva Morales?" said the commandante, loosening a pistol in his belt.

The quick eye of the "Coyote" saw the movement.

"Riva Morales no longer," he replied, "but *Riva Velasco*, the son of the murdered hunter! Fifteen years ago was my father slain, and with his dying hand and blood he marked the name of his assassin. Here is the missing page of the roster," and with his left hand he drew it from his bosom. "The name marked with the blood-spot is *yours*. Miguel Castello, you are the assassin of my father!"

Miguel drew the pistol from his belt—too late! Crack! went the long weapon in the hand of the "Wolf." The bullet struck Miguel in the temple and hurled him from the saddle to the prairie, dead.

The soldiers, at the death of their leader, did not attempt resistance, but fled in wild dismay.

The "Red Coyote" had fulfilled his oath!

Our story is finished.

Manuelita, her father and Pablo pursued their way to lower California, where they arrived safely. Shortly afterward, Rita and Pete joined them, and from Pete Manuelita learned the story of Arthur's love for the Indian girl.—Like a sensible maiden, she did not die for love, but strove to forget her passion, and succeeded so well that she learned to love another, and that other was the dashing Pablo, the companion of her flight.

Rita and Pete were married, of course, and our honest



friend never regretted the day he wed the girl with the "wondrous brown eyes."

Arthur took his Indian wife to his native Kentucky home, and to-day some of the "best blood" of the famous "blue-grass region" trace back their line to Arthur Kenton and his half-breed bride Lupah, the Flower of the Prairie.

A few years after the events we have related, a revolution commenced in Mexico, which finally swept the Spaniards from the land, and Mexico was free. And in the roll of glorious names at the close of the struggle, none ranked higher than the dashing cavalry leader, Riva Velasco, the hero of a hundred desperate fights, the idol of his soldiers, who called him "El Giro," or the "man with the scar," but we know him better by another title—the "RED COYOTE."

**THE END.**



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